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AN ESSAY

BY

HALLDÓR HERMANNSSON

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When the Norwegian colonists settled in Iceland during the ninth and tenth centuries they found the country unoccupied, if we except the few Irish anchorites who had established themselves there on the southeastern coast, and who soon left, since they were unwilling to live together with heathen people. Thus the Norwegian tongue received no admixture in the new home from native sources; though a few Celtic words were introduced by the colonists who came from or by way of the British Islands and Ireland, but most of these disappeared again from the language. The physical conditions of the country were similar to those of the Norwegian home of the settlers, if anything less multiform, and hence required the same or even a more restricted vocabulary. The change of abode consequently had little influence upon the richness of the language, as there was no need for neologisms or expressions for new and previously unknown conditions. The dialect which became prevalent in Iceland was that of the southwestern districts of Norway, whence the greater number of the settlers came. The language of this early period is known from the oldest skaldic and Eddic poems,¹ and probably differed in no perceptible degree from the tongue as spoken in Norway at the time. There soon developed, however, various peculiarities in the speech of the Icelanders, which distinguished them from their kinsmen in Norway. These changes, slight in the beginning, grew and became more distinct and numerous as time went on, and are noticeable in the earliest literary records, but it was long until they reached such a stage as to make difficult the intercourse between the two peoples.

The introduction of Christianity in the beginning of the eleventh century required new additions to the vocabulary, bringing as it did a foreign cult and new religious ideas and doctrines for which there were no terms in the ancient tongue. To meet this it was necessary either to borrow the foreign words,

¹ See Finnur Jónsson, *Det norsk-islandske Skjaldesprog omkr. 800-1300.* København, 1901, 8°, pp. 123+ (3).

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TO VIKINGAR
AMAGAHLAÐ

ISLANDICA

mostly of Latin origin and often in their Anglo-Saxon form, as Christianity came by way of England, or to translate them, or to invent new words, or to make use of already existing words and change their meaning.¹ Christianity brought with it the Latin writing and before long it was applied to the native tongue. In the earlier half of the twelfth century an ecclesiastic wrote a grammatical treatise with the purpose of adapting the Latin alphabet to the Icelandic language. He gives a very clear description of the various sounds, and indicates their pronunciation by the position of the lips. From the Runic futhark he retained the character þ to denote both the hard and soft *th*-sound (it was not until about the beginning of the thirteenth century that the latter was indicated by ð). The author's alphabet was in the main accepted by his countrymen; the accent he placed over the vowels has found application in Modern Icelandic, to be sure, with a somewhat different meaning.²

The earliest name for the language is *dönsk tunga* (Danish tongue), a term which covers the ancient Scandinavian in general, and, so far as records go, was first used by Sighvatr Póðarson in a poem of about 1015; other poets used it, like Markús Skeggjason (ca. 1104) and Einar Skúlason in 1153, and even so late as Eysteinn Ásgrímsson in his *Lilja* about the middle of the fourteenth century.³ The term, according to Gustav Storm, may possibly have originated from the custom of Western European nations to comprise all the Scandinavian peoples under the name of Danes.⁴ It is not until the thirteenth century that we meet with the word *norræna* as applied to the West-Scandinavian languages (Norwegian and Icelandic), and by that name the Icelanders themselves called their tongue down to the sixteenth or seventeenth century, when the term *islenzka* became prevalent.

¹ See B. Kahle, *Die altnordische Sprache im Dienste des Christentums. I. Teil. Prosa.* Berlin, 1890; publ. as part 4 of vol. i. of *Acta Germanica* (pp. 305-441); also his 'Das Christentum in der altwestnordischen Dichtung,' in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* XVII, 1901, pp. 1-40, 97-160.

² See *Den første og anden grammatiske Afhandling i Snorres Edda udg. ved Verner Dahlerup og Finnur Jónsson.* København, 1886. 8°, pp. (4) + xxxii + 96 + (1).

³ Finnur Jónsson, *Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning.* A. I Bd. 1912, pp. 228 (Víkingarvísur, v. 15), 450 (Eiríksdrápa, v. 27), 464 (Geisli, v. 26); II. Bd. 1915, p. 364 (Lilja, v. 4).

⁴ G. Storm, *Krit. Bidrag til Vikingetidens Historie.* Kristiania, 1878, p. 20.

In the twelfth century various changes took place in the quantity of the vowels as well as in the inflectional endings.¹ It was during that century that the practice of adding the post-positive article to the nouns became common. The classical saga writing flourished then, culminating in the works of Snorri Sturluson (1178-1241), and for beauty of style and purity of language it has always been looked upon as a model by succeeding generations. Even in works which at that time were translated from foreign languages, like legendary stories, homilies, and lives of the saints, the diction is pure and natural, and in reading them one hardly notices that they are translations; so skilfully have the translators handled the subject. Without doubt the literary language was the common speech, elevated and with the addition of certain rhetorical turn and peculiarity of style. It has been remarked that the language had reached such a high stage of cultivation through the study of the poetic idiom, in which a thorough training was necessary for the poets and, to a lesser degree, for their audience. The poetry with its complicated metres required the most scrupulous observation of the forms and stress of words, and stringent rules had to be followed in the formation of new words or circumlocutions (*kenn-ingar*).

In the thirteenth century, the native historical tradition having to a great extent been written down, the Icelandic writers adopted a custom, already prevalent in Norway, of translating romantic sagas, or they wrote fictitious sagas, partly in imitation of the historical sagas, partly on foreign models. This naturally influenced the language, both as to style and vocabulary, because the contents and the whole atmosphere of the romantic literature called for new terms, and consequently many foreign words and expressions found their way into the language. There were also changes in the pronunciation, in the lengthening of vowels, and in the inflectional endings.² About 1350 the classical literature definitely came to an end, and the Middle Icelandic period began, lasting for about two hundred years, an important time in the history of the language, but somewhat obscure on account of the poverty of prose writings.³ In the earlier half of

¹ A. Noreen, *Geschichte der nordischen Sprachen besonders in altnordischer Zeit*. 3. Aufl. Strassburg, 1913. §§ 8, 10.

² A. Noreen, *op. cit.*, § 10.

³ A. Noreen, *op. cit.*, § 10.

the period the language seems to have preserved its ancient character as to quantity, but the latter half is marked by important changes which form the transition to Modern Icelandic. Foreign words were much in use, of Latin origin especially among the clergy; others of Danish and Low German origin had a wider circulation and were found in the speech of the common people.¹ During this epoch arose the peculiar *rimur*-poetry which enjoyed a great popularity down to the middle of the nineteenth century. The word *rima* itself is probably derived from German, while the metres employed were formed in imitation of those of the Latin church hymns, and the circumlocutions were borrowed from the skaldic poetry. The language of the *rimur* is an important guide in tracing the gradual linguistic changes which were brought about during those two centuries.² From the earlier half of the Middle Icelandic period date several sagas written in a fairly good style, but the language of these still remains to be thoroughly investigated.³

The political situation of Iceland must be briefly considered, as it is of importance in this connection. After having remained independent of all foreign authority in secular matters for nearly four centuries, the Icelanders finally surrendered in the years 1262-64 to the Norwegian king. For more than a century they were ruled by the kings of Norway, and in 1380 together with that country were united with Denmark. The language in Norway had down to that time been very similar to the Icelandic, but the fourteenth century was ominous for the future of Norway in this as in other respects. The long and bitter civil wars had decimated the ranks of the nobility and had finally resulted in strengthening the royal power at the expense of the aristocracy. With this change the interest in national traditions and literature had waned; towards the end of the century the royal house died out and its power passed into the hands of foreign kings. But the greatest calamity was caused by the plagues which ravaged the country, killed the population and put an end to all independent literary life. The people no longer could

¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske Litteraturs Historie*, III. Bd. København, 1902, pp. 1-2.

² Finnur Jónsson, *op. cit.* pp. 30-31; Konráð Gíslason, *Efterladte Skrifter*. II. Bd. 1897, pp. 144-215.

³ Finnur Jónsson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

resist the foreign authority and influence, and the Norwegian tongue gradually deteriorated until Danish finally became the official language. In Iceland, on the other hand, the Danish influence was scarcely noticeable in the beginning; it grew, however, as time went on; some of the bishops of the Icelandic sees were of Danish extraction, and literary influence is shown by the fact that the Danish popular ballads became known in Iceland, where they were translated or imitated.¹ But the Icelanders permitted the power of legislating to pass out of their hands, and it was in that way that the Danish influence gained hold and many Danish words were taken up. The Low German words which at the same time entered the language are traceable to the Hansa merchants who from Norway extended their field of operation to Iceland. These words often occur in the *rimur* of the period, and that is indicative of their being also used by the people at large. Many of them, however, disappeared again. The English were the principal competitors of the German tradesmen, but they were as a rule on bad terms with the natives, and therefore their language has left no permanent traces in Icelandic,² although in certain districts a few English words have been used in the popular parlance, but these are probably of a later date and came through intercourse with fishermen.³

The Reformation, which sealed the fate of the native language in Norway, gave impetus to a linguistic and literary revival in Iceland. With the publication of the Icelandic translation of the New Testament by Oddur Gottskálksson in 1540⁴ we date the beginning of Modern Icelandic. As stated above, the prose

¹ See Finnur Jónsson's articles in *Aarbøger for nord. Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1914, pp. 1-62 (De islandske Folkeviser) and in *Ársrit hins ísl. Fræðafélags*, 1916, pp. 35-48 (Íslensk fornkvæði).

² Finnur Magnússon, 'Om de Engelskes Handel og Færd paa Island i det 15de Aarhundrede,' etc., in *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Oldkyndighed*, II. Bd., 1833, pp. 112-169.

³ Eggerth Ólafsson, *Reise igjennem Island*. Soroe, 1772. I, pp. 464-465.

⁴ Halldór Hermannsson, *Icelandic books of the sixteenth century (Islandica, IX)*, 1916, pp. 2-4. Since that was written a biographical essay on Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson by his nephew Rev. Torfi Jónsson has been found and published (Jón Halldórsson, *Biskupasögur* II, 1911-15, pp. 330-382) which mentions a copy of a translation of the New Testament, printed under the auspices of Bishop Jón Arason; it was buried with Bp. Brynjólfur, and no copy has been heard of before or afterwards, nor does the biographer give the date of printing. Consequently it is impossible to say whether this mysterious translation antedates that of Lawman Oddur.

writings since the end of the classical period had consisted chiefly of fictitious sagas and a few annalistic works, and for the last century or so even these had been entirely abandoned. The translation of the New Testament was therefore an undertaking of the greatest importance, initiating a new epoch in the language and the literature. It was based principally upon Luther's German version, but the Vulgate was also consulted. The translator had a tendency to follow slavishly the German text, and hence the sentences often appear foreign to the reader; besides he used foreign words very freely. These are chiefly of German or Low German origin, and some of them had doubtless been used in Icelandic before, but incorporated in the New Testament they acquired a prestige and henceforth were used in sermons and other religious works, even down to the present day. Among these may be mentioned words with the prefix *for-* (German *ver-*), such as *forheyra*, *forganga* (to be lost), *forlíkja*, *fornema*, *forblinda*, *forlita*, etc. Then there were other words like the verbs *blífa*, *skikka*, *bítaða*, *dára*, and the nouns *slekti*, *thesaur*, and so on. Some words of this or similar character may be found in earlier religious works, like the *Stjórn*, but not to the same extent as here. The New Testament was followed by a translation of A. Corvinus' *Postilla* (1546), also from the pen of Oddur Gottskálksson;¹ it has the same merits and demerits as the earlier work. One looks at it at random and finds such words as *innplantaður*, *typtaður*, *fortapaður*, *lystilegur*, *bikenna*, *locka*, *articulus*, etc. Good new words will hardly be found in either of these works, but in spite of that and other blemishes which may be pointed out in their pages, it is not to be forgotten that the language is often pure and pithy, even beautiful, and later translators have not always improved upon the passages which they have changed.² Oddur's co-worker in the Reformation movement was Bishop Gizur Einarsson of Skálholt. He translated a few of the books of the Bible as well as other religious works, but these were not printed excepting that some of his biblical

¹ Halldór Hermannsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.

² For controversy about Oddur's translation of the New Testament, see G. Vigfússon and F. Y. Powell, *An Icelandic prose reader*. Oxford, 1879, pp. 265-336, 433-443; Birfukur Magnússon, *Dr. Guðbrand Vigfusson's ideal of an Icelandic New Testament translation*, etc. Cambridge, 1879, 8°, pp. 44, and his *Nokkur orð um þófingu Odds lögmanns Gottskálkssonar á Matteusar guðspjalli*. Reykjavík, 1879, 8°, pp. 56.

translations were, probably in a slightly revised form, afterwards incorporated in Bishop Gudbrand's Bible. In his private and official correspondence Bishop Gizur used indiscriminately foreign words and phrases of all kinds; one meets there with such words as *hast*, *forskulda*, *dándizpika*, *fornægilse*, *sermon*, *for-sóman*, *bilæti*, *hýra*, *bifalning*, and so forth.¹ And the same thing can be said generally of the clergy at that time. On the whole it will be found that the language is far better in the letters and documents of the secular authorities and laymen.

The immediate successors of these two pioneers of the Reformation in no way improved upon their work. The translations, in poetry and prose, which came from the pen or were issued under the auspices of Marteinn Einarsson, Gísli Jónsson, and Ólafur Hjaltason, were anything but creditable.² As soon as Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson began his activity as writer and publisher, things took on a new aspect. He had much at heart the purity of his native tongue, as is evident from his works and his frequent avowals to that effect.³ He probably wrote a better style than most of his contemporaries, although that may not be saying much, and his edition of the Bible (1584),⁴ much as there may be found to criticize in it as to individual words and phrases, construction of sentences, and correctness of translation,⁵ will always remain one of the monumental works of the language. His religious zeal unfortunately misled him and made him combat the secular poetry and the old sagas, the best of which, however, were scarcely found in the hands of the people in his day. In his numerous translations he nearly always followed the foreign originals too closely, so that they did not make good and easy reading, and that among other things made them perhaps less acceptable to the public, of whose indifference the good bishop never ceased to complain. Arngrímur Jónsson, the bishop's cousin and collaborator, was one of the most learned men of his age and well-versed in Old Icelandic literature, but he certainly did not display in his Icelandic

¹ For Bp. Gizur's letters, see *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, vol. IX.

² Halldór Hermannsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-15.

³ See his preface to the *Psálmbók* of 1589, quoted in *Islandica*, IX, pp. 37-39.

⁴ Halldór Hermannsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-35.

⁵ Cf. Eiríkur Magnússon, in *The Saturday Review* XXXVII, 1874, p. 439.

writings much literary skill or practical linguistic knowledge. His translations (most of his books which were printed during his lifetime were of that type) are not superior to those of the bishop, and one of his descendants compared his poetry to rough stakes spiked together with rusty iron nails.¹ Arngrímur's interest in the Old Icelandic literature was directed to its contents more than to its form and vocabulary. He, at all events, did not imitate it, although he translated many of the sagas into Latin.

The seventeenth century shows a steady decline of the language. The theological and devotional books exceeded in number all other publications, and they were almost entirely translations, more slavish and clumsier than the earlier ones, the revision of the Bible (Bishop Þorlák's Bible) of 1644 perhaps being an exception to the rule.² What little else was written was unfortunately influenced by this translation style. And if the prose was in a bad state, the same can be said of the poetry. Since the Reformation this had consisted mainly of hymns and religious poems and, like the prose, had in the beginning been translations or, at least, imitative of foreign models, which affected equally their form and their language. We have, of course, in this respect to distinguish between the various poets, but the general standard was low, and some of the hymns, even of the more noteworthy writers, are ridiculously crude. There were two poets who towered above their contemporaries and will always be counted among the literary lights of their country. These were Hallgrímur Pétursson and Stefán Ólafsson. Their language, although terse and generally smooth, is, however, far from being always pure and correct.³ The *rimur*-poets, who flourished all through the century, delighted in obscure and complicated circumlocutions which make their works some-

¹ Jón Ólafsson, 'Um þá lærðu Vídalín,' in Páll Vídalín, *Visnakver*, 1897, p. xx.

² Cf. *The Saturday Review* XXXVII, 1874, p. 439.

³ About Hallgr. Pétursson's language, see Finnur Jónsson in *Skírnir* LXXXIX, 1915, p. 348.—His verse 'Gef þú að móðurmálið mitt,' etc., must not be interpreted as an appeal for linguistic purity; it has reference to heresy. On the other hand we have an evidence of H. P.'s attitude towards the language in a letter of 1671 to Þormóður Þorfason, where he writes: 'En hafi þeir gómlu norsku um þetta diktað, og í sinni gamalli norsku uppskrifað, leiðist eg ekki til að trúa, að þeir hafi öðrum tungumálum þar inn blandað, svo sem nú gerum vær með skaða og niðrun vors ágæta og auðuga móðurmáls.' (*Andvari* XXXVIII, 1913, p. 60.)

times difficult of understanding. This was nevertheless considered to be good form and in the style of the ancient poetry, or Edda-like, as the phrase ran. A special class of the *rímur* were those treating biblical or sacred subjects; they were originally written at the suggestion of Bishop Guðbrandur in his fight against the secular poetry which they were to replace; but they found little favor with the public, doubtless for the same reason as influenced the old woman who thought the gospels uninteresting because there was no battle in them; the subjects, in other words, were alien to the tradition of this kind of poetry. The Hólar publications had nevertheless a strong influence upon the country in various ways, as might be expected, since they were the only printed books which circulated among the people. The Northlanders had probably some dialectic peculiarities of their own, and these may have been made common through the Hólar books. This seems at least likely in the case of the sound-transition of *é-je* which is said to have originated in the North.¹

The great interest in the old Icelandic literature during the seventeenth century is manifested by the editions of sagas and other works relating to the subject which then saw the light. Especially noteworthy is the activity of Dr. Ole Worm in Denmark, and of Olof Verelius, Olof Rudbeck and others in Sweden. The large collections of Icelandic manuscripts were founded at that time, and Danes and Swedes vied with one another in securing these treasures. Philological and antiquarian studies were pursued by many Icelanders with great zeal, spurred on by Worm. Two dictionaries² and one grammar of the language by Icelandic authors which were published during the century owe their origin to his encouragement and interest. The first dictionary, *Specimen lexici Runici* by Magnús Ólafsson (Hafniæ 1650), need not detain us here, as the words therein are exclusively drawn from the ancient literature. The other, *Lexicon Islandicum sive Gothicæ Runæ vel linguae Septentrionalis diccionarium*, by Guðmundur Andrésson (d. 1654), was first pub-

¹ Björn M. Olsen, 'Om overgangen é-je i islandsk,' in *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* III, 1886, pp. 189-192. Cf. also Jón Borgfirðingur, *Söguágríp um prentsmíðjur og prentara*, 1867, pp. 54-55.

² There seems also to have been printed at Hólar an Icelandic vocabulary which now is unknown. In a letter dated Aug. 29, 1643, Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason writes to Ole Worm: 'Mitto autem Vocabularium, typis nostris impressum' (Worm, *Epistola I*, p. 109).

lished by Peter Resen in 1683, long after the author's death, and unfortunately is full of misprints. It covers modern Icelandic as well as the old tongue, very imperfectly to be sure, as might be expected from but 269 quarto pages. The author tries to show the corresponding words in Hebrew, since, according to Ole Worm and other learned men of the time, all languages were derived from Hebrew. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the success of that etymological experiment. The best Icelandic dictionary of the period was, however, Verelius' *Index linguae veteris Scytho-Scandicae*, edited by Rudbeck in 1691, but it included only words from the old Icelandic literature, which the Swedish scholars, for obvious reasons, preferred to style Suio-Gothic or Scytho-Scandic. It was compiled with the assistance of Icelanders who lived in Sweden. One of these, Jón Rúgmann, had previously published a pamphlet called *Monosyllaba Islandica* (1676) which also included words from the spoken language of the day. All these dictionaries were written for and used by scholars, principally foreigners. They are therefore of little consequence for the history of the language in its development, although they may now and then have been of service to Icelandic writers. On the other hand, they are valuable for the history of Icelandic philology.

The grammar by Runólfur Jónsson, *Recentissima antiquissimae linguae Septentrionalis incunabula, id est Grammaticae Islandicæ rudimenta* (Hafniae, 1651),¹ is an interesting work and deserves to be analysed here, as it shows us what idea the learned men of the time entertained as to the nature and structure of the language. And for nearly two centuries it remained the only printed grammar of Icelandic. In his preface, the author says that he had learned to appreciate the richness and beauty of the mother tongue through translating Latin works into Icelandic and Icelandic into Latin, and he continues: *Sumus enim plerunque eorum, quæ a natura ipsa hausimus, incuriosiores: nec causas rerum rationesve scitamur, quæ ab ineunte ætate, una cum lacte materno nobiscum quasi coahuere. Habet enim maximæ evidentiæ instar insitum Nature dictamen. Hac vero occasione cum tam accuratas concinnasque vocum inflexiones, tam elegantes*

¹ There are two later editions of this grammar, printed at Oxford in 1688 and 1703, cf. H. Hermannsson, *Catalogue of the Icelandic Collection bequeathed by W. Fiske*, 1914, p. 306.

constructionum modos, tam exquisitos verborum delectus, tam miram sententiarum varietatem, tam denique insignem figurarum vim ac splendorem in lingua patria animadverterem, ut neutri illarum gravitate, neutri venustate cedere videretur, cæpi vehementius mirari, qui factum sit, quod e tot præstantibus ingenio et eruditione viris in hac lingua et natis et egregie versatis, nemo de ea quicquam insigne literis prodidisset: Cum et vastissimum hujus materiae copia sufficiat oceanum, per quem judicij pariter ingenijque velis latissime vehi potuissent, et nihil commendatius habere debuissent, quam ut linguam patriam illustrandam susciperent. He was of the opinion that the Icelandic language of the day was identical with that spoken by the ancient Scandinavians. In his dissertation, entitled *Linguae Septentrionalis elementa*, which was published in the same year as the grammar, he says: *Eadem ratione Islandica hodie vocatur, quod alibi depravata, soli Islandi pura et incorrupta utantur.*

The first chapter of the grammar treats of the letters and contains a few unsatisfactory rules about their pronunciation. The character *p* is used to denote the two *th*-sounds, where *d* is not used for *ð*. The author is under the impression that it is a modern usage to pronounce *h* before *l*, *n*, and *r*. The next two chapters deal with the declension of nouns, which he divides into two groups, *declinatio simplex*, and *declinatio composita*, according to whether the article precedes or is affixed to the word. He takes the positive article to be the demonstrative pronoun *sá-sú-pað* and declines it with all the paradigms, giving six cases of it, the vocatives being *pú*, *pier*, while the ablative takes the preposition *af*. The postpositive article, on the other hand, is in his opinion the personal pronoun *hann*, so that *maðurinn* (*maduren* as he writes) stands for *maður-hann*, and *mannsins* (*mansens*) for *manns-bess* or *manns-hans*. Within each of these two chief declensions or groups there are four subdivisions, based upon the ending of the nouns in the nominative singular. The first of them includes feminines ending in *a*, with the genitive ending *u*. The second, feminines forming the genitive singular in *ar* and with the nominative ending *b*, *d*, *f*, *g*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, *r*, *s*, *t*, *u*, *y* and monosyllables in *a*, as illustrated with sixteen paradigms. The third, masculines and neuters ending in *d*, *l*, *n*, *r*, *s*, *x*, and neuters in *b*, *e*, *f*, *g*, *i*, *k*, *m*, *o*, *p*, *t*, *u*, all of which have the genitive ending *s*; he gives twenty-three paradigms,

but he has considerable difficulty in grouping all such words together, and has to explain many exceptions. The fourth comprises masculines and feminines ending in *e* (modern *i*) and neuters in *a*, the genitive of the masculines and neuters ending in *a*, of the feminines in *e* (*i*). He notes especially where umlaut takes place in the nouns, but he is unable to give reasons for it or to put down definite rules as to where it occurs. All this classification, as will be seen, is most unsatisfactory since it is entirely based upon the last letter of the words in the nominative singular. The fourth chapter is devoted to the adjectives, of which he gives eight paradigms according to the nominative ending, each with or without the definite article, but it seems doubtful if the author had a clear idea of the significance of the definite and indefinite forms. In chapter five he treats heteroclitic nouns, that is those which have no plural or singular—among the latter of which he counts *fretter* (*fréttir*), and those which he could not arrange under any of the declensions. Chapter six deals with genders, numbers, cases, and the like, and finally with the numerals; while chapter seven tells about the pronouns, the division of the various pronouns being very imperfect and in cases erroneous. The eighth chapter is devoted to the verbs. He divides them into two classes, personal and impersonal verbs, and of the former he mentions various divisions such as active (*eg dæmi*), neuter (*eg græt*), and deponent verbs (*eg andasi*); and then he distinguishes between verbs of the primitive (*eg nýt, eg brýt*) and the derivative class (*eg nyika, eg brotna*), and between verbs of simple (*eg eyk, eg vik*) and composite form (*eg videyk, eg hjávík*). Then he gives the conjugation of the auxiliary verbs, and declares that the future tense is formed by the infinitive and the verbs *eg skal, eg mun, eg mó*, and even *eg á*. The conjugations are five. The first includes verbs which in the first person singular pres. indic. act. end in *a*, the second and third persons in *ar* (*eg eliska; þú, hann elskar*); the reflexive form he treats as if it were the passive, although he adds: *In hac forma verbum eg elskast potius deponentialis significationis est quam passivæ*; in other verbs where no reflexive is possible he forms the passive by *eg er* or *eg verd*. The verbs of this conjugation form the preterite in *de* (*elskade*), from which there are, however, a few exceptions, such as: *skapa—skóp* or *skapte; geyja—gó*. The second conjugation comprises verbs where the ending

of the first person sing. pres. indic. act. is *e*, of the second and third persons *er* (*eg brenne; þú, hann brenner*). The third, verbs where the first person sing. indic. act. ends in *i*, the second and third persons in *ir* (*eg sný; þú, hann snýr*), but to this only a few verbs belong, such as: *eg bjó—bjó; eg dý—dúde; eg fljó—flúde; eg njó—néré; eg dey—dó; eg spjó—spjó*. The fourth conjugation embraces verbs with *b, d, f, g, k, l, m, n, p*, and *t* in the first person sing. pres. ind. act., and *ur* in the second and third persons, such as *eg hverb [hverf], eg bid, eg gef, eg ligg, eg vik, eg fel, eg tem, eg finn, eg krýp*, and *eg et*. And finally the fifth comprising verbs which in the three persons singular pres. indic. act. end in *r* and *s*: *eg, þú, hann ber; eg, þú, hann les*. The five remaining chapters of the grammar treat briefly of the participles, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections. I have entered so fully into the contents of this work so as to show how deficient and erroneous the grammatical conceptions were at that time and for a long time afterwards. In a postscript the author promises, if his health will permit, to publish a work on the syntax of Old Icelandic. This plan he did not carry out, as he died three years later.

Among the foremost Icelandic scholars of the century was Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson of Skálholt. He applied to the government for permission to establish a printing office in Skálholt, from which were to be issued secular books only, principally the old sagas and other works of the classical period. His colleague of the Northern see, Bishop Þorlákur Skúlason of Hólar, fearing the competition from another press, succeeded in thwarting the plan.¹ Hence it was that it fell to the lot of foreigners to edit and publish the editions of the Old Icelandic literature which saw the light during that century, and these were as a rule expensive, with Latin translations and learned commentaries, and therefore never reached the Icelandic public. If the people read any part of that literature they had to depend upon manuscripts, and these likewise soon got beyond their reach, as the Danish and Swedish governments tried by all means to get hold of them and took them out of the country. What was left Árni Magnússon finally secured or borrowed, bringing it to Copenhagen, where the richest collection of old Icelandic manuscripts still bears his name. In the meantime Bishop

¹ See the letters of the two bishops to Ole Worm, in his *Epistola*, 1751.

Pórður Þorláksson of Skálholt had got control of the Hólar press and brought it to Skálholt, where he issued a few sagas, not without apologies, since the press was always supposed to exist primarily for the purpose of printing works on religion.¹ These saga editions were welcomed by the people, and are now among the rarities of the Icelandic press. But if there had been more of such books on the market at that time, it doubtless would have benefited the language and improved literary taste.

Instead, the decline of the language continued throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. There were only a few works, like Bishop Jón Vídalín's sermons, which rose above the average, but the Bible suffered a revision downwards. The Stein's Bible—so called after Bishop Steinn Jónsson of Hólar—introduced many Danicisms and incorrect words which thus found their way to the pulpit and into devotional works in the hands of the people. There arose then also an open hostility towards the ancient literature from the side of the Icelandic clergy as well as from the Danish government, which had become imbued with pietism. Bishop Jón Árnason of Skálholt, an otherwise meritorious prelate, referred in most contemptuous terms to the study of Icelandic antiquities,² and the government issued ordinances limiting or even forbidding the time-honored custom of reciting sagas and profane poetry in the home, urging the clergy to discourage or prevent such a practice.³ When Björn Magnússon published at his own expense two volumes of Icelandic sagas in 1756 he was denounced for it by many ministers

¹ Cf. his postscript to *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, 1689, vol. ii.—In his preface to the *Landnáma*, 1688, the bishop writes: 'Oskande væri þess, ad vær heldom vid vort gamla Móburmaal, sem Forfætt Vorir brukat hafa, ok briaalupum því ecki, því skealdann fer betur þegar breytt er, seiger gamall Maalshaattur; mætti bad oss heldur til hroþurs horfa, at vær heldom oumbreittu því gamla oc vidfræga Norraeno maali, sem brukat hefur verit at fornu i miklum parti Norþuhalfunnar, einkum Danmörk, Noregi, Sviariki, etc.'

² In a letter of Nov. 23, 1741, he asked: 'Hvað er þessi fornaldar literatura og skáldskapur annað heldur en andskotans sæði, hverju hann hefir spúð í sitt einkaverkfoeri Óðin kong og hans selskap' (*Æfisaga Jóns Porkelssonar skólameistara í Skálholti*. I, 1910, p. 131). And the Danish Bishop Ludvig Harboe, in his circular letter to the clergy of the Hólar diocese (dated May 25, 1743), calls the Icelandic antiquities and sagas 'kristindómsins skömm.' (*ibid.*, p. 125.)

³ See *Forordning umm Huus-Vitianer aa Islande*. May 27, 1746; Hólar, 1746, 4°, pp. (7)–(8), § 18; and *Tilskipan umm Huus-Agann a Islande*. June 3, 1746; Hólar, 1746, 4°, p. (4), § 7.

and he felt compelled to say a few words in his own defence in the preface to the second volume.¹

The deterioration of the language was, perhaps, more marked in the laws and official documents than in any other field. When the Icelanders in the thirteenth century surrendered to the king of Norway they reserved to themselves the power of legislation, but the kings soon encroached upon this privilege, and in time the initiative to laws came to rest primarily with the ruler and his advisers. Especially was this so after the introduction of the Reformation and more particularly after the absolute monarchy had been recognized by the representatives of the Icelandic nation in 1662. The old legislative body, the Althing, lost its former prestige and authority and became a place where the royal ordinances were promulgated, and these were published in its proceedings, as a rule, in Danish. The highest officials were, with few exceptions, Danes or Norwegians, unable to talk and write the language, sometimes even having difficulty in understanding it; hence official communications and public documents and letters were most frequently written in Danish, or when written in Icelandic, were so filled with foreign words and phrases that it would have almost been preferable if the vernacular had been entirely dispensed with.² The government favored a greater uniformity of law within the monarchy. Thus after the codification under Christian the Fifth of the Danish law in 1683, and of the Norwegian law in 1687, it issued the rescript of April 14, 1688, commanding various Icelandic officials to write an Icelandic law code in as close conformity to the Norwegian one as the customs and the conditions of the country allowed. This command was repeated in 1719 and 1732, and although extensive drafts were made, the code was not completed. In 1760 it was entrusted to one man, Lawman Jón Ólafsson of Viðidalstunga, but he did not carry it out, and the plan finally fell through.³ There was no deliberate attempt on the part of the government to interfere in any way with the use of the Icelandic language. On the contrary, it seems rather

¹ *Agiðar formanna sögur*, Hólar 1756. Cf. also *Æfisaga Jóns Porkelssonar skólamæistara í Skálholti* I, 1910, p. 132.

² Cf. e.g. Eggert Ólafsson's poem *Maga-skifti* (*Kvaði*, 1832, pp. 226–227).

³ See for this *Lovsamling for Island* I, pp. 472–475, 751–754; II, pp. 137–140; III, pp. 398–409, 652–654.

to have encouraged its use, as might be inferred both by these repeated efforts to bring about an Icelandic law code, and by causing translation of some laws to be issued from the Hólar press, and by the rescript of April 30, 1751, directing that all laws and ordinances concerning Iceland should be published in Danish as well as in Icelandic. This last provision practically became a dead letter, and unfortunately the government acted in this matter as often in others, taking away with the one hand what it gave with the other.

There were, of course, those who deplored this state of affairs, such as Lawman Páll Jónsson Vídalín, the author of a valuable commentary on the ancient law code called the *Jónsbók*.¹ He and his like were, however, exceptions, and indifference towards the language was the rule among the lay and learned. While the codification was not completed the government temporarily introduced certain sections of the Norwegian law code, concerning court procedure and penal law, and the Icelandic judges appear to have been more than willing to follow them, even going beyond the commands of the government. This led to great confusion and uncertainty as to what laws were in force in Iceland. About this time university degree was required for judges, and having during their student days become accustomed to Latin and Danish terminology, they applied it afterwards often without any thought or hesitation in their judicial decisions and communications. This whole tendency found its expression in print in Sveinn Sölvason's *Tyro juris edur Barn i lögum* (1754) which from a linguistic point of view remains one of the worst books in the language.² The author deliberately and on set purpose used Danish and other foreign words and phrases where there were perfectly good Icelandic equivalents, and he defended his action in a much quoted passage of the preface. He says there in part: 'I frankly admit that there are seldom to be found

¹ In the paragraph *dönsk tunga*, Páll Vídalín remarks: 'Og ekki er því að neita, að síðan andlát Guðbrands biskups 1627, hafi tungan hér á landi stórlæga breyzt frá sinni fornú smilli, og með ýmsu móti blandast framandi glósum, enn einna mest síðan deyði Brynjólfur biskup, anno 1675, því síðan hefir einginn hér á landi kunnad til gagns að bókstafa tungu vora, þá rita skyldi, nema *assessor* Árni Magnússon, hann alleina og þeir fáir, sem af honum numið hafa, og er grátlegt að sjá þann afmyndaða bögu-stýl, sem nú skrifa hér allmargir, séreilis *in particulari nativo decoro* stórir settlerar orðnir frá forfeðrum vorum' (*Skýringar yfir fornyrði lögþókar*, 1854, p. 138).

² Cf. Rask's words about the book, in a letter of 1810, *Tímarit hins ísl. Bókmentaféli*. IX, p. 85.

in this book old classical words which are now out of fashion, and that instead I have sometimes made use of those words that are derived from the Danish which I consider no blemish, since our laws nowadays come from the Danes, so that one cannot get along without Danish in judicial proceedings; and as our affairs in most cases are dependent upon the Danes, why should not our language share the same fate? Besides all such words are very intelligible and have come into general use in our day; there are only a few men who cling so firmly to their antiquities that they can hardly write a private letter without making one think that their style was that of Ari the Learned or Snorri Sturluson rather than of men who live in the eighteenth century. And if they reprove my *Bevisingar*, *Betalinga* and other *Barbarismos in Lingua patria*, as they will call it, I shall make a counter charge against them for their *Archaismos* and bring my case before the court with this verdict of Quintilian's: *Abolita et abrogata retinere insolentiae cuiusdam est, et frivola in parvis jactantia.*' We shall presently see against whom these last words were directed.

Having lost their political independence the Icelanders allowed commerce gradually to pass out of their hands, and they became dependent upon foreign merchants. And matters went from bad to worse when the trade monopoly was introduced in 1602, placing the inhabitants at the mercy of Danish tradesmen who with their agents and clerks understood little of the Icelandic tongue and cared less for it. The corruption of the language in the mouths of these foreigners defies any description, and their presence within the country was bound to have bad effect upon the natives who came into contact with them and in particular upon those who lived in the immediate neighborhood of the trading stations. The latter were eager to talk Danish and prided themselves upon interspersing their speech with foreign words and phrases; and probably the saying *Auðlærð er ill-danska* owes its origin to their efforts and feeble achievements in this line. The intercourse with these foreigners had a corrupting influence upon colloquial Icelandic and it has proved very difficult to get rid of its effects; they are still noticeable at the present time, as will be pointed out further on.

We possess an account of the language as it was spoken in the various parts of the country about the middle of the eighteenth century, from the pen of Eggert Ólafsson, who with Bjarni

Pálsson, travelled all through the country with the support of the Danish Academy of Sciences. His observations can be briefly summarized as follows.¹ In East Iceland he found the speech purest; not only were there very few foreign words mixed with it, except near the three principal trading stations, but few new Icelandic terms and phrases had found their way thither; this, of course, was due to isolation, and especially was this true of certain districts of Skaptafelssýsla where the inhabitants were looked upon as queer by the other people. Similar were the impressions of Árni Magnússon and Páll Vídalín who traversed these parts in the beginning of the century.² In North Iceland the language was likewise fairly pure and correct, it was best in the region around Mývatn, and in West Iceland it was in most places uncorrupted with the exception of a few districts where English and French words had crept in through intercourse with sailors and fishermen. But in South Iceland (covering Gullbringusýsla, Árnессýsla, Rangárvallasýsla, and Vestmannaeyjar, with the exception of a tract like the Flóði whose inhabitants on account their general backwardness, whence they were called *Flóafifl*, had preserved the language) the tongue had changed and been corrupted more than anywhere else, and for this the author gives four reasons. In the first place, the influence of German merchants before and after the Reformation had been strongest here. Secondly, many foreigners had for a long time resided in these parts, both government officials and merchants; these districts being the most thickly populated, with many harbors and fishing stations, the contact with the foreign element was closer and shared by a greater number. Thirdly, the Althing was held here, and was mostly frequented by the people of the South, but the language of the administration and in judicial procedure had become notoriously bad, so that the common people often understood but little of it; still young men prided themselves in imitating it, although they frequently misapplied the words or corrupted them still more, if that was possible. The fourth and the last reason was, according to the author, to be found in

¹ Vice-Lævmand Eggert Olavssens og Land-Physici Biarne Povelsens Reise igennem Island, etc. Soroe, 1772. I. Bd., §§ 69–70, 291, 600, 607; II. Bd., §§ 736, 755, 808–809, 885, 886.

² Cf. also Ben. J. Gröndal, in *Rit þess isl. Lærðómslistafélags X*, 1790, p. 286.

the presence of the Latin School in Skálholt; from it many foreign phrases and words penetrated into the speech of the people. Not only did the clergymen adorn their sermons with such things, but the farmers had also picked them up on their numerous visits to the see. Educated men all over the country, and even farmers in the South would commonly use Latin greetings like *Salve Domine, Bonus dies, Bonus vesper, Gratias, Proficiat, Dominus tecum, Vale*, and so on. The use of Latin words was, however, on the decline, while German and French expressions were becoming more fashionable. Reading sagas aloud and reciting poetry were practised more or less throughout the island; in many places people refrained from it during Lent and on holidays. In the last hundred years this custom had declined somewhat and was least common in the South. It was noticeable that in the districts where it was most widely observed, there the language would invariably be better preserved. The written language and the spelling were perhaps best in the North, presumably on account of the presence of the Hólar press, and worst in the South. He hints at improvement being started in this respect in the Western province, probably having in mind his own efforts and those of his followers. Dialectic differences he noticed in various parts of the country, and these he took to be of ancient origin; they are still to be found to a like extent in those places at the present day. In viewing the whole linguistic situation the author realized that quick and energetic reforms were necessary to purify the language and prevent further decline.

But he takes even a gloomier view of the matter in one of his poems entitled *Sótt og dauði Íslenszkunnar* (the disease and death of Icelandic).¹ It consists of seventy-six stanzas divided into two parts of which the first describes the ailment and search for its remedy. Icelandic, personified as a woman, has become ill from taking too many foreign words; she summons her children to her bedside and asks them to go around in the country and see if they can find 'good, honest Icelandic speech,' which would cure her. They go in all directions, but good and uncorrupted language is nowhere to be found. The results of the search agree in main with the author's account of his own

¹ Eggert Ólafsson, *Kvæði*, 1832, pp. 124-132.

observations quoted above. When the sick person hears this, she rapidly grows worse and prepares herself for the end, which is described in the second part of the poem, together with her last will, the funeral feast, the epitaph and the poet's own reflections. The last stanzas constitute an earnest appeal to his countrymen to preserve the language and to avoid a mixture of tongues. He reminds them that their mother tongue is held in high honor among foreigners, and that ought to be an incentive for them to take a good care of it, besides remembering how painstaking and particular their ancestors were in that respect. He, however, frankly admits that his own writings and speech are not free from blemishes of the kind he criticized in others.

Eggert Ólafsson's warning was timely, but his suggested reforms were of such a character that they could not meet with success. In 1762 he wrote a short treatise entitled *Nokkrar óregluglegar reglur um það, hvern veg eigi að skrifa, bókstafa og tala þá nulifandi íslensku tungu*, in which he put down the principal rules for the spelling, writing, and pronouncing, of Icelandic. This has never been printed, and the original manuscript was lost with him at sea, but an abstract made by himself is extant. The work was chiefly based upon the grammatical treatises appended to the Snorra Edda and other early writings, and the author thus proposed a return to a bygone age, which, of course, was absolutely impracticable.¹ Only two of his suggestions, to re-introduce *ð* and put an accent over the vowels to indicate their length, were afterwards adopted. And when he attempted to put his principles into practice in writing, his spelling and vocabulary were often confusing or unintelligible to readers, and he was compelled to append to them explanations or a glossary. This is best illustrated by his pamphlet in the memory of his uncle, *Nockrar hug-hreystelegar harma-tavor erfter ágætan mann Guðmund Sigurdarson* (1755). There, to mention a few examples, he writes *v* before *o* where it had disappeared long before (*uordinn*), but he drops *h* before *r* and *l* (*rid* for *hrið*, *lutr* for *hlutur*), which had always been preserved in Icelandic, although in some early manuscripts that spelling may be found, due to Norwegian influence. He frequently uses foreign words

¹ Bjarni Jónsson, *Um Eggert Ólafsson*, 1892, pp. 34-35.

(*akta; understaped*), or antiquated words and awkward neologisms (*siá* for *sá*; *jáqued*; *úljúgheitr*; *hólbere*); and the style throughout is affected,¹ a four-page list of words is added at the end. Much better is his *Stutt ágrip úr lachanologia eda maturta-bók* (1774). In spite of much foreign influence in the construction of sentences and the needless use of many foreign words this work taken as a whole is written in a remarkably pure language for its age, and the spelling is good.² This, doubtless, to a large extent was due to Rev. Björn Halldórsson, the author's brother-in-law, who made the abstract and edited the book. The latter wrote a good style for his times, as his two works *Atle* and *Arnrún* show. He took a practical view of the language question, and probably possessed a better knowledge of the modern tongue than any of his contemporaries. Whether Eggert Ólafsson was in any way influenced by the Danish movement for language reform which was started about the middle of the century³ I am unable to say. He must, however, have been acquainted with it, but those reformers followed a different method; theirs was creative and progressive, while his was principally retrospective. Their activity bore fruits, his was without directly practical or tangible results. Still he had not worked in vain. His voice had awakened the people and kindled their love for the land and language, and thus he became the precursor of a new epoch.

An imitator of his was Ólafur Olavius, the author of *Greinileg vegleidsla til talnalistarinnar* (1780) and of other works. In this book he followed in a large measure Eggert Ólafsson's orthography and affectation of style, however, without dispensing with foreign words and expressions, even where there were Icelandic ones available. Thus, for instance, he uses *nóti* for *merki*, merely because the former is found in older language; *núll* (zero) he avoids calling the cipher *ð*.⁴ An altogether better

¹ Cf. the author's preface, pp. 5–8.

² See Magnús Ketilsson's review in the *Islandske Maaneds Tidender*, II, 1774, pp. 21–22.

³ Verner Dahlerup, *Det danske Sprogs Historie*. København, 1896, pp. 75–79.

⁴ For the author's views on writing, see the preface, pp. xxv–xxvii.—For Jón Eiríksson's opinion of the book, see Sveinn Pálsson, *Æfisaga Jóns Eyríkssonar*, 1828, p. 134.—Magnús Stephensen calls it 'en næsten uforstaaelig islandsk Lærebog for Ungdommen i Arithmetik' (*Island i det attende Aarhundrede*, 1808, p. 184.).

impression makes another contemporary publication on the same subject, Ólafur Stefánsson's *Stutt undirvísan í reikningslistinni* (1785). Its constructions are frequently foreign, nor is there any attempt made at translating or finding equivalents for many terms, such as *product*, *sifra*, *prófa*, and others; but its style is more natural and unaffected, and the author purposely avoided antiquated phrases which children and young people might find difficult to understand, there having in mind his predecessor's faults.¹

But if there were men who were carried to extremes in archaism, there were others who went in the opposite direction and were willing to sacrifice their mother tongue and adopt a foreign language. Sveinn Sölvason, whom we have mentioned above, represented this type to a certain degree, but even he was outdone by others. In his report to the Royal Commission of 1770, Bjarni Jónsson, then rector of the Skálholt School, expressed the opinion that it was not only useless but directly harmful to keep up the Icelandic language which no one understood outside the boundaries of Iceland, and he proposed that the Icelanders follow the example of the Norwegians and the Faroese and adopt the Danish language.² Another Icelander, Porkell Fjeldsted, advocated practically the same thing, but not quite so openly and sweepingly. In his book *Om en ny Handels Indretning udi Island* (1784) he suggested that numerous colonists of different nationalities, Jews and Gentiles, be sent to Iceland and granted all sorts of privileges; this, if carried out, would have constituted a grave danger to the language. There were even more impracticable schemes put forth at the time, such as that of transferring the whole Icelandic population to the heaths of Jutland. All this naturally met with scorn and ridicule from patriotic and sensible men in Iceland. In his monthly paper Magnús Ketilsson opposed the project of Bjarni Jónsson, without mentioning his name, showing both the disadvantage, and the impracticability of the plan.³ Rev. Gunnar Pálsson, an enthusiastic student of his native language and literature, ridiculed Fjeldsted's attitude in a long poem entitled *Litið ávarp til þess, sem tjáist að fjörráð vilji brugga*

¹ See the preface, pp. (13)-(14).

² Jón Helgason, *Pegar Reykjavík var fjörlán vetrar*, 1916, p. 25.

³ *Islandske Maaneds Tidender* III, 1776, pp. 81-87.

íslenskunni.¹ But here we touch the tragic-comical in this matter. Magnús Ketilsson wrote and edited his paper in Danish, and Gunnar Pálsson defended the mother tongue against its enemies in a poem full of barbarisms. This is certainly a case where one has to take the will for the deed.

At the same time the question of reform was constantly kept alive and some progress made through the work of the Icelandic Literature Society (*Hið íslenska Lærdómslistafélag*) which was organized in Copenhagen in 1779.² Its by-laws contained special provisions about language, the purport of which was that the society in its publications should preserve the Icelandic tongue (*norrana tungu*) and take pains to purify it from foreign words and phrases; such were never to be used in its publications, but either ancient and mediæval words, and in case such did not exist, new words were to be coined which expressed clearly the meaning of the thing in question, being formed in accordance with the principles of the language; if necessary these neologisms were to be explained so that they might be correctly understood by readers. Words of foreign origin which were found in the writings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries might be employed when no others were available. The regular members of the society were to pass upon writings submitted for publication, and were permitted to make changes in them both as to style and individual words.³

It is not overstating the case to say that the volumes issued by the society were the most important publications from a linguistic point of view that had appeared since the art of printing had been introduced into Iceland. In the first place, the spelling was better and more consistent than in any printed book before that time. In some respects it was, however, antiquated, as in the use of *t* for *d* (*tekit*, *pat*, *at*) and *r* for *ur* in end of words. An accent was placed over long vowels as Eggert Ólafsson had suggested. But the editors were not entirely satisfied with their own rules and felt the desirability of placing the orthography on a firmer and better defined basis; there-

¹ *Andvari* XXXVIII, 1913, pp. 80-84.

² Halldór Hermannsson, *The periodical literature of Iceland down to the year 1874 (Islandica XI)*, 1918, pp. 10-16.

³ *Ens Islandska Lærdoms-Lista Felags Skraa*, 1780, pp. 6-8, chap. i, §§ 5-7;—*Nýjar Samþyktir*, etc., 1787, § 2, sect. 3.

fore they expressed the wish in volume eleven (1791) that an Icelandic orthographic dictionary be compiled which should briefly, though clearly and comprehensively, set forth fundamental rules for the writing of the language, pure and unmixed, both as to the origin, composition and spelling of words; in compiling such a work, they suggested, that the rules adopted by the society as well as those propounded by Eggert Ólafsson in his treatise might be of some service.¹ It is not known that any one tried his hand at this, so it seems that the appeal of the society fell on deaf ears. Nor was there at the time any one who could have done it satisfactorily.

As to subjects the volumes cover a wider field than any publication before them. The different contributions naturally vary as to style and vocabulary, but it seems as if the editors really exercised a supervision over the articles that secured a measure of uniformity. It was, of course, easier to write about fishing and farming, laws, administration, and history of the country, than to treat themes which had never or seldom before been dealt with in the language, such as the various branches of natural science, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, and the like. But even here all possible efforts were made to avoid the use of foreign words, and hence we find many new words of native origin. They show, however, on the whole a limited skill or imagination in word coinage, and are as a rule merely verbal translations or imitations mostly of the Danish terms, and consequently few of them have obtained a permanent place in the language; such are, for instance, *vegstöng*, *jafnvigt* (later there is also used *jafnvægi*), *grunnmaskína*, *hugargrip*, *dampahvolf*, *forgaunguskrif*, *grunnstæður*, *grashoppur*, *papagóar*, *aðalskrif* (*frumrit* and *höfuðrit* are also used), *sjónarplát*, *sjónarspil*, *frihöndlun*, *atvinnumeðal* (*bjargræðisvegir* also occurs), *botnvoðir*, *skálavigt* (*met* and *metaskálar* are also to be found), etc. Geographical names and adjectives are most frequently Danish or slightly modified, such as *þeir chinesisku*; at other times attempts are made to Icelandicize them. There is an obvious groping for words, especially in the case of scientific and technical terms, so that we find different words for the same idea. Mathematics is called *mælingarfræði* and *mælifræði*; geometry,

¹ *Rit þess isl. Lærðómslistafél.*, XI, 1790, pp. 305-306.

landmælingarfræði and *mælingar-kunnáttu*, and in volume nine are numerous new geometrical words, all very long and awkward; epipedometry is *flatamæling*; machine, *hræringar-verksfæri*; mechanics, *hræringar-kunnáttu*, and so on. Many medical terms are likewise to be found: *sjúkdómafræði*, pathology; *uppskurðarfræði*, anatomy; *handlæknislist*, surgery; *byggingarmáti og náttúrukrapta skýrsla mannlegs líkama*, an expression for human anatomy and physiology; and *bólusetning*, vaccination. Of terms from natural science might be mentioned: *þburður*, monster; *blömbikar*, *duptveifari*, and many other botanical ones; *sugudýr*, mammalia; *lithverfingar*, chameleons; *málmmódir*, ore; *rafkaptur*, electricity, etc. At other times one finds antiquated and inappropriate words like *letrgiörð* and *bókmáli* for writings or publications. And then again one comes across some good new words like *hortittur*, padding, doubtless originally a slang expression, and fairly good ones like *skjalari*, sophist. Space forbids us to enumerate more of these; suffice it to say that taken all in all the experiments are worthy of all respect. The style frequently limps; foreign models are followed too closely, there are long sentences with many relative clauses, the genitive stands before the governing noun, and other things of that kind. But even in this respect there are improvements upon previous practice. And one can not lay these volumes down without an expression of admiration for the writings of Jón Eíríksson who, although he lived from early boyhood outside his native land, wrote a purer language and a better style than any of his contemporaries, perhaps better than any of his countrymen since ancient times. The poetry is on the whole worse than the prose. With the exception of the poetical translations of Benedikt Gröndal and Jón Þorláksson, the translated poems are uniformly bad. Johnsonius' original poems are somewhat better than his translations, but one has to look long for a more complicated and obscure poem than his *Islands vaka*, and it is no wonder that his poetry was not accepted as a model by other poets, although the editors recommended it highly as such.¹

The Society for National Enlightenment (*Hið íslenska Landsuppfræðingarfélag*), with its leader Magnús Stephensen, next

¹ It is this kind of poetry Magnús Stephensen has reference to when he says: 'Man har nye Sange, mod hvilkes Mørke den Sæmundinske Eddas Sange bliver lutter Lys' (*Island i det attende Aarh.*, 1808, p. 184).

became for a few decades the arbiter in literary and linguistic matters, having the control of the only printing press in the country through which numerous publications were issued.¹ In its by-laws of 1796, the society reserved the right to change in literary contributions which it was to publish single words that might be foreign or ill-adapted, but the style of a work could not be altered without the author's consent. It could, however, improve upon translations, and correct or modify spelling in accordance with the rules which it had adopted.² The language reform was never emphasized by the society. Its aim was above all to provide the public with reading matter different from what they had been used to, useful as well as entertaining; and this it did, but more attention was paid to content than to form. Hannes Finnsson's *Qvöldvökur* became deservedly a popular book, and the numerous writings of Magnús Stephensen, if they did not teach people good style, at least supplied them with information on modern topics and awakened them to reflection. But the language in many of the society's books represents as it seems a step backward from that of the Literature Society's works. Magnús Stephensen's own style was genuinely foreign in its constructions and arrangement; his new words were literal renderings from the Danish. Look, for instance, at the *Minnisverð tilindi*, where sentences like the following meet the eye: *fólkis er ·forráðið, niðangalega forráðið; kastalinn Bastille er með áhraupi inntekinn; klingjandi hljóðfæri; hrærandi bréf; samkomunni leiðzt ei annað enn svípta hans hötuðu moldir þeim óður veitta Pantheons sóma; þetta dygða og lærðoms ógleymanlega munstur.* The sentences sometimes extend over a page or more without a period or semi-colon. The rhetoric is out of keeping with Icelandic usage and is a sheer imitation of the Danish style of the period. His legal writings, on the other hand, are of a different stamp; there the language is infinitely better and superior to what was customary at the time. In religious books he also brought about a reform, by eliminating meaningless and conventional phrases which abounded there,³ but such changes were not

¹ Halldór Hermannsson, *The periodical literature, etc., 1918*, pp. 17-24, 28-32.

² *Sambeyktir hins Ísländska Lands-Uppfræðingar Félags*, 1796, pp. 10-11.

³ See *Minnisverð tilindi I*, pp. 324-325, 334-338, where Magnús Stephensen ridicules such phrases as: *bess helvítiska hræfugls, djófulsins, lopteitranir; að útsjúga sælerka af Jesú brjósti; að opna oss blöðfagrar dyr sinnar síðu til inngangs í Paradís; þurlendi guðs gæzku; viðsmjör Guðs velgjörða; vín guðs bendinga*, etc.

always as much appreciated as they deserved to be by his contemporaries, and sometimes were even severely reprobated.

The language in the *Qvöldvökur* is, considering the times, remarkably good; that no solecisms should be present would be too much to expect. In it are to be found the first attempts at play-writing in Icelandic; these were two light comedies (*gleði*), one in one act (*flokkur*), the other in two and divided into several scenes (*atriði*). The bishop also included a translation of the Epistle to the Galatians, different from the earlier renderings, which with its notes supplies contributions to the history of the Icelandic translations of the Bible; this experiment is said to have been condemned by some people.¹ In two other works of the society an effort was made to form a scientific terminology; this was in Campe's *Sálarfræði* (1800) and his *Stuttur síða-lærðómur* (1799), but it was not successful and the new words have not been used by later writers.

On various occasions Magnús Stephensen gave a thrust at the purists on one side, and on the other at those who, so to speak, gorged on foreign words and phrases, maintaining that he himself escaped the two extremes and followed the golden mean in the question of style and language. In his history of the eighteenth century in Iceland he devoted several pages to this matter. He says there that the Icelanders may justly be proud of having preserved their ancient tongue and that in this respect none of the European nations could match them. Undeniably impurities had crept in, especially in the spoken language in districts nearest to the trading stations, and these he deplored. He likewise deprecated the wholesale admission of foreign words and phrases, but he pointed out the necessity of enriching and extending the vocabulary so as to keep pace with human progress and new inventions in all fields, which must find expression in the language or remain unknown to the popular mind. He scorned the method of always looking backwards and resorting to archaisms, not realizing perhaps that the archaists, ridiculous as they often are, render unseldom a service by reminding the people of the ancient models which may with advantage be followed or built upon. He showed, however, poor judgment when he put two Icelandic writers of the eighteenth century on a level with Snorri Sturluson, but all will heartily agree with him

¹ *Vinagleði*, 1797, p. 299.

in his condemnation of the obscurantism and affectation in the poetry of the day.¹ Magnús Stephensen and his age had no adequate understanding of the language question any more than of the strength and value of popular traditions.

In spite of good intentions and persistent efforts the language reformers so far had not accomplished much; the study of the language and its monuments was steadily pursued and in increasing numbers works of the old literature were issued in print, mostly in costly editions. But all reform must be based upon a thorough knowledge of the language, its structure and history—and it was exactly this which was so imperfect. Runólfur Jónsson's grammar was still the only one available² and was considered by most people to be entirely satisfactory; even the learned P. F. Suhm declared that no better was needed. The Swede N. H. Sjöborg published in 1802 an abridgment of it and renamed it a grammar of Gothic-Icelandic, thus neither in this nor other respects improving upon it. A complete change was finally brought about by a young Dane, Rasmus Christian Rask, who while a pupil in the Odense Cathedral School had become interested in the Old Norse-Icelandic literature and began to study it by himself. He read Snorri's *Heimskringla* without the aid of grammar or dictionary, but as he proceeded worked out a grammar himself based upon this and other texts, and in 1809, when the author was only twenty-two years of age, the printing of his grammar was begun in Copenhagen and it was issued in 1811 under the title of *Vejledning til det islandske eller gamle nordiske Sprog*.³

This little book of some three hundred pages completely revolutionized the study of the Icelandic language as well as that of the Germanic languages in general. A brief analysis of it will be necessary here. It is divided into six sections, the first of which (*Forberedelse*) deals with pronunciation, orthography and the like. The second treats of accidente (*Form-*

¹ Magnús Stephensen, *Island i det attende Aarhundrede*, 1808, pp. 179–185.

² There was a later grammar by Jón Magnússon (1662–1738) which in some ways was better than Runólfur Jónsson's; it was never printed, but circulated in manuscripts. (AM. 992, 4to; 1000, 4to; 1001, 4to). See Rask, *Anvisning till Isländskan*, 1818, p. xxiii.

³ Bjarni Þórarensen and Hallgrímur Scheving had in preparation an Icelandic grammar in Latin, but abandoned the project when Rask's appeared, and later presented their draft to him. Cf. Rask, *Anvisning*, 1818, pp. xxii–xxiv.

lære). Rask divides the nouns into three groups according to the gender, but within these groups distinguishes between two declensions of the neuters, three of the masculines, and three of the feminines; thus he has in all eight declensions (*Forandringsmaader*), but in reviewing them he comes to the conclusion (Afd. 2, § 14) that each of the three genders really has only two different groups of declensions, 'the simple' where the genitive does not differ from the other cases in the singular, and 'the complex' where there is a greater difference in the case endings. There should therefore be only six declensions, but the last of the masculines and feminines have to be divided into two according to the genitive ending, the plural, and the vowel change. In the revised Swedish edition of 1818 (*Anvisning till Isländskan*) he divides the nouns according to this final conclusion of his, and in the *Kortfattet Vejledning til det oldnordiske eller gamle islandske Sprog* of 1832, he calls the two groups 'the open' and 'the closed.' In his two earlier works he had, like Runólfur Jónsson, made a distinction between the declension of nouns with the postpositive article and without it, but this division he abandoned in the last work. Thus we see that Rask was the first to discover the fundamental principle for the declension of nouns, which now is accepted, his 'simple' or 'open' corresponding to the weak declension, the 'complex' or 'closed' to the strong. He also found the causes for the mutation or umlaut in the nouns.¹ The verbs he divided into two conjugations which, in the *Vejledning*, he called 'the first' and 'the second'; this he changed in the *Anvisning* to 'the simple' and 'the complex,' and in the *Kortfattet Vejledning* to 'the open' and 'the closed,' but which are now called the weak and the strong respectively. The third section of the *Vejledning* deals with word formation; the fourth with syntax, which the author, on account of its brevity and fragmentary character, calls notes on syntax; the fifth with prosody, principally based upon Jón Ólafsson's work of 1786, and the sixth with the dialects. All these subjects with the exception of prosody were treated here systematically for the first time.

¹ Jacob Grimm who reviewed the grammar in *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung* (1812), says about this: 'Mehr scharfsinnig, als wahr, mag auch die auslegung sein, welcher der vf. bei gelegenheit der declination (s. 44. 45) von dem grund des casusumlauts gibt' (*Kleinere Schriften* VII, 1884, p. 518); yet after some correspondence with Rask he accepted it in his German grammar.

Rask next was entrusted with the editing of Björn Halldórsson's Icelandic-Latin dictionary which, with the addition of Danish translations from his pen, was published in 1814 (*Lexicon Islandico-Latino-Danicum*), thus far the greatest contribution to Icelandic lexicography, and still a work of importance, especially for the modern tongue. In 1813 the Danish Royal Academy had announced the following prize question: 'To investigate by historical criticism and to demonstrate with appropriate examples the sources of the ancient Scandinavian language; to show the character of the language and to make manifest its relations, from the earliest times down through the Middle Ages, partly to the Scandinavian dialects, partly to the Germanic dialects; moreover to determine with exactness the principles upon which the derivation and comparison of these languages are to be built'. Rask's answer to this question was finished in 1814, but did not appear in print until 1818, with the title *Undersögelse om det gamle nordiske eller islandske Sprogs Oprindelse*, a work which, to use the words of a famous philologist, 'was of so great importance that it may properly be said to have laid the foundation upon which the whole modern comparative philology rests.'¹ In this work Rask pointed out that the proofs for the relationship of languages were not to be produced through a comparison of single words, but were to be sought in the conformity of grammatical structure; he showed, for the first time, that certain phonetic laws governed the transition from one language to another, and clearly defined the sound changes which had taken place between the Scandinavian and other Germanic languages on the one side and Greek and Latin on the other, thus discovering what is generally known as Grimm's law, but which consequently more properly should be called Rask's law, as Grimm did not discover it, but only extended its application.²

¹ L. F. A. Wimmer, *Rasmus Kristian Rask. Mindetale*. 1887, p. 8.

² 'Der er ikke tale om større skarphed [hos Grimm], men større bredde. Og da det er givet, at Grimm har læst Rasks udvikling om dette æmne paa en tid, da han selv befandt sig i fuldstændig uklarhed, er det ikke rigtigt at betegne lydforskydningsreglerne som "Grimms lov." Det er Rasks lov. Og Rask har krav paa at anerkendes som den første indoeuropæiske sprogsammenligner, der har haft øjet opladt for lydlovenes betydning' (Holger Pedersen, *Et blik paa sprogvideneskabens historie med særligt hensyn til det historiske studium af sprogets lyd*. København, 1916, p. 58; cf. also pp. 52-58).—On Rask's work in general see especially: Vilh. Thomsen's article on Rask, in *Nordisk tidskrift* (Letterstedtska) 1887, pp. 593-606, translated into German by C. Appel, in Bezzenger's *Beiträge zur Kunde der indogerm. Sprachen*.

As Rask in his *Vejledning* had placed the study of Icelandic on a scientific basis, so in his *Undersögelse* had he practically fixed its proper place within the family of languages.¹ Neither of these works was, however, flawless, nor could it be expected. One of the principal mistakes that Rask made was to identify the Old Norse or Old Scandinavian language with the tongue which had been and still was spoken in Iceland. He became fully aware of his error when he arrived in Iceland in 1813. He remained there until 1815 studying the language and visiting various parts of the country, thus becoming thoroughly acquainted with land and people, and acquiring such a proficiency in the language as to be able to talk it like a native. He was shocked when he heard the language spoken in the South and feared it was all on the road to destruction.² His apprehension was somewhat allayed as he became acquainted with the districts where the language was purer.³ Publicly he was reluctant to admit the difference between the ancient and the modern tongue, chiefly, as it seems, because he thought that if this became generally known, it would tend to diminish the interest which foreigners took in modern Iceland,⁴—an argument which still is occasionally advanced by overzealous and misguided patriots.

XIV, 1889 pp. 317–330; L. F. A. Wimmer, *R. K. Rask. Mindetale*. Köbenhavn 1887, pp. 20; Björn M. Ólsen, *R. K. Rask. Minningarrit gefið út af hinu íslenska Bókmentafjelagi*. Reykjavík, 1888, pp. 125 (also in *Tímarit hins ísl. Bókmentafél*. IX, 1888, pp. 1–125); N. M. Petersen's biographical essay in Rask's *Samlede Afhandlinger* I, 1834, pp. 1–115 (reprinted in Petersen's *Samlede Afhandlinger* I, 1870, pp. 217–343); Vilh. Thomsen, *Sproghistoriens historie. En kortfattet fremstilling*. Köbenhavn, 1902, pp. 39–45; Finnur Jónsson, *Udsigt over den norsk-íslandske filologis historie*. Köbenhavn, 1918, pp. 63–67; Otto Jespersen, *Rasmus Rask. I hundredaaret efter hans hovedværk*. Köbenhavn, 1918. 8° pp. 80, illustr.

¹ Rask objects to the use of 'Germanic' as a generic term including the Scandinavian languages, and prefers 'Gothic' (*Undersögelse*, pp. 71–72). On the recent tendency in the same direction among Danish scholars, see *Danske Studier* 1916, pp. 157–160; 1917, pp. 43–48, where the word 'Gottonic' is recommended.

² 'Annars bjer einlæglega að segja held jeg, að íslenskan bráðum muni útaf deyja; reikna jeg, að varla muni nokkur skilja hana í Reykjavík að 100 árum liðnum, en varla nokkur í landinu að öðrum 200 þar upp frá, ef allt fer eins og hingað til og ekki verða rammar skorður við reistar; jafnvel hjá beztu mönnum er annaðhvort orð á dönsku; hjá almúganum mun hún haldast lengst við' (letter to Bjarni Thorsteinsson, Aug. 30, 1813. Ólsen, *R. K. Rask*, 1888, p. 56).

³ 'Málið var hreint og króptugt, nema kánske í eystri hluta Skaptafells-sýslu dálítið afbakað í stöku tilfellum' (letter to Jón Poriákkson, Nov. 24, 1814. Ólsen, *R. K. Rask*, 1888, p. 96).

⁴ Letter to Grimur Jónsson, Nov. 18, 1817 (Ólsen, *R. K. Rask*, 1888, pp. 90–91).

He was convinced that the language could be reformed and that it contained within itself the means for restoration and further development. He pointed out in the *Vejledning* that it distinguished itself by its facility for new words, by its rich vocabulary and flexibility, and that it was superior to most, if not all, Western European languages in purity and originality, 'that sweet quality which for language is what independence is for the state.'¹ The decline was due to foreign encroachment, and it was all important that this be checked. As a poetic language he considered the Icelandic to be the richest and most excellent of all in Europe.²

With the purpose of supporting and maintaining the Icelandic language and literature, the Icelandic Literary Society (*Hið íslenska Bókmentafélag*) was founded in 1816 by Rask and his Icelandic friends.³ The earliest publications of the society are, however, of small linguistic significance. Its annual, the *Sagnablöð*, was written by Finnur Magnússon in the same style as he several years before had used in the third volume of the *Minnisverð tīðindi*. The large geography issued by the Society (*Almenn jarðarfræði og landaskipun eður geographia*, 1821-27) is, however, a noteworthy work in the history of the language. Rask had planned it, took great interest in its execution from a linguistic point of view, and made numerous suggestions as to the treatment of foreign names.⁴ The printing took several years, and the writing was done by various hands, so that there is some lack of unity in it. An attempt was made here to fix the geo-

¹ *Vejledning*, p. ix.—'Pað kalla jeg aðal sjerhverrar tungu, sem henni er einkum auðið fram yfir aðrar tungur í heiminum. Svo held jeg alls engin geti jafnatz við norrænu í tilliti til skáldskapar, þegar smekkfull skáld yrkjá, og fáar kanske í krapt og djarfleik, þegar mælskumenn tala. Enskan hefir sin höfuðríkdóm einkum til skarprar þenkingar og því næst til skáldskapar, franska til kurteisi, hæversku og blómsturlegrar mælsku. Nú kalla jeg það aðal íslenzkunnar að hafa hina framkosti en vanta bessa, og er það sem miðr sýnist hennar eðli, hvort sem það er fullkomleikur eða eigi. Þó hefir hún annan eiginleik fram yfir flestallar þær tungur, er jeg hefi nokkra bekkingu á, nefnilega óandanlegt nýgervingaefni, og vona eg, að hún á þeim hætti[!] geti jafnatz við hverja aðra, sem til er eða nokkurn tíma hefir til verið í heiminum' (letter to Grímur Jónsson, Jan. 1, 1810. Ólsen, R. K. Rask, 1888, p. 87).

² 'Det rigeste og herligste poetiske sprog, som Europa har at opvise' (*Litteratur-bladet*, 1828, p. 158; *Samlede Afhandlinger* II, p. 479).

³ Halldór Hermannsson, *The periodical literature of Iceland*, 1918, pp. 26-28.

⁴ See his letter to Grímur Jónsson, dated Nov. 18, 1817 (Ólsen, R. K. Rask, 1888, pp. 90-91).

graphical terminology; this, with many modifications, has been followed more or less in later works of the same kind. There is noticeable some indecision as to the proper word to be used; thus two or three words sometimes express the same thing; for example, centrifugal force is rendered by *framfararflug*, *fleigi-eða slöngukraptur*, *fráflugskraptur*. We find in it terms like *jarðarmálsfræði*, mathematical geography; *jarðareðlisfræði*, physical geography; *býngdareðli* or *aðráttarkraptur jarðar*, gravitation; *mælistig*, degree; *snertilína*, tangent; and *afurðir* product. Many of the neologisms are less successful, and in their efforts to supplant a foreign word, the writers have used clumsy or even misleading terms of native origin, such as *mentabúr*, museum; *þjóðskóli*, university (*háskóli* is used later); *þjóðsjóður*, bank; *hnossasmíðar* and *hnossgrípir*, works of art; *síðferðisstjórnarráð*, police; *lærifeður*, professors; *sæt vötn*, fresh waters; and others of the same kind. Proper nouns are usually modified so as to make it easier for the readers to pronounce and remember them, sometimes they are translated, and wherever an Old Norse or Icelandic name existed it is invariably used.¹ But names of nations are generally expressed in the Danish manner, the adjective being used in place of the noun, e.g., *Pýskir*, *Danskir*, *Engelskir*, etc. The style in all the volumes, on the other hand, differs only slightly from that common in other works at the time, so in that respect there is not much progress to record.

The foundation of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries in 1824, on the initiative of Rafn, Rask, and other Danes and Icelanders, must be mentioned here. Its aim originally was to publish Old Icelandic texts and it rendered a valuable service. What reception its publications met with in Iceland can best be gathered from the list of subscribers appended to volume three of the *Fornmannasögur*. In Iceland alone there were 774 subscribers, and among them we find men of all classes, lay and learned, judges and clergymen together with merchants, farm hands, and fishermen. These good and readable saga editions were of inestimable value for improving the popular taste, ac-

¹ One of these names is *Valland*, which occurs in the Old Icelandic literature and is properly used there for Northern France, but which in this geography and in many Icelandic books of later date is used for Italy, which is entirely wrong.

quainting the public with the classical saga style and pure language. The *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, another of the society's text editions, apparently were not nearly so popular in Iceland, since the subscribers in that case numbered only 158 all over the country; and if one may be allowed to guess the reason for this, I feel inclined to look for it in the fact, that the people had for so long a time been fed on the fabulous sagas, whence depreciated them, while they gladly embraced the opportunity of obtaining the historical ones. Of the sale of the two volumes of *Íslendinga sögur* (1829–30) I find no record. But all this tends to show that the people at large were now eagerly interested in the old literature, and thus the ground was prepared for a linguistic reform as soon as some one was found to assume the leadership.

At this juncture we shall retrace our steps and investigate what place the mother tongue down to this time had held in the two highest schools in the country, the Cathedral Schools of Skálholt and Hólar. In 1552 these schools were founded by the Danish government, but little was taught there except Latin and theology. In the beginning most of the teachers were foreigners, and with such an arrangement no cultivation of the native language or attention to it was to be expected.¹ The books for instruction were all in a foreign tongue, usually in Latin.² Later on, however, one finds examples of books being translated into Icelandic for the use of the schools, although these were not always printed;³ in the first half of the eighteenth century Bishop Jón Árnason of Skálholt translated and published a Latin grammar and two dictionaries as text books to be used in the school. These were *Donatus, hoc est: Paradigmata partium orationis Latino-Islandica* (Copenhagen, 1733); *Lexicon Latino-Islandicum grammaticale þad er Glosna kver á Latinu og Islandsku, likt Grammatica* (Copenhagen, 1734); and *Nucleus latinitatis, quo pleræque Romani sermonis voces . . . ordine*

¹ See Janus Jónsson, 'Saga latínuskóla á Íslandi til 1846,' in *Tímarit hins ísl. Bókmentafél. XIV*, 1893, pp. 1–97. Cf. also Jón Sigurðsson, in *Ný félagsrit II*, pp. 1–167.

² In Denmark the textbooks were likewise in Latin, and Jersin's experiment of writing a Latin grammar in Danish was condemned by many pedagogues (see Bricka, *Dansk biog. Lexikon* I, pp. 502–503; VIII, pp. 458–459).

³ For instance, Þorleifur Halldórsson translated Søren Glud's *Logica eratomica* (see *Islandica* VIII, p. viii), and Bishop Jón Vidalín translated Math. Porsius' dictionary, *De nomenclaturis romanis* (cf. *Ný félagsrit VII*, p. xiii), but neither of these was printed.

etymologico adductæ, & interpretatione vernacula expositæ comprehendentur in usum Scholæ Schalholtinæ (Copenhagen, 1738), the last, a work of 2,092 columns in octavo, being the only Latin-Icelandic dictionary of any size which has been published for the use of Icelandic schools.¹ Such books as these must have been a great help to beginners who, at least in this subject, were not entirely dependent upon foreign works. After graduation the students who desired further education than the Cathedral Schools gave, went to the University of Copenhagen, where all instruction, of course, was in a foreign tongue; it affected their speech and writing, which became still more interspersed with foreign words and phrases, and so remained even after their return to Iceland,² and their habit was imitated by the common people, as Eggert Ólafsson has told us.

In the school ordinance of May 3, 1743, it was provided that the teachers should be well-versed in their native language in order that they might show the disciples how to write it with no admixture of other languages, or of plain, vulgar phrases and words, and in a pure, clear, and intelligible style which could easily be understood by those who heard or read it, and without obscure or affected expressions or other useless embellishments; for this purpose the pupils were now and then to translate exercises from Latin into Icelandic and vice versa.³ All this sounds well, but it probably was difficult to find teachers who could carry it out to the letter, and we have direct evidence that it was not done.⁴ In the Bessastaðir School (1805–46) there were nominally two or three hours a week devoted to Icelandic composition,⁵ but this was of very little consequence.⁶ And add to

¹ This dictionary was nicknamed *Kleyfsi*, an Icelandization of *Nucleus*, but doubtless also as a play on the word *klaufi*, a bungler.

² See what Jón Porsefsson (Thorchillius) had to say about this, in his *Afsísa* 1910, I, pp. 99–101; II, p. 123.

³ Anordning om de latinske Skoler paa Island, 3 Mai 1743 § 37c (*Lovs. f. Isl.* II, pp. 454–455).

⁴ Rev. Árni Helgason who studied in the first Reykjavík Latin School writes: 'Boðið var að píltar skyldu lera Geographia og Arithmetica, en hvorugt var þar kent í minni tíð, engin danska, engin íslenska, en okkur bara sagt, að við ættum að lera þetta, og það gekk þá upp og niður' (*Safn til sögu Íslands* IV, p. 86).

⁵ Directionen for Universitetet og de lærde Skolers Skrivelse angaaende Undervisningen i Skolen, etc. 16. Juni 1806 (*Lovs. f. Isl.* VII, pp. 74–75), and the reports of the Bessastaðir School 1840 ff.

⁶ 'Í skólanum á Bessastöðum var öll kensla í íslenzku fólgin í því, að neðri-bekkingar voru látnir snara einu sinni í viku á íslenzku einhverri danskri klausu, svo sem örðrumegin á oktavista' (Jón Guðmundsson, in *Ný félagsrit* IX, 1849, p. 78).

this state of affairs that all the text-books were in Danish or Latin, which not only made the study more difficult for the pupils,¹ but also contributed further to the neglect of their own language. Rask was the first to condemn the practice and point out the danger from it.²

And yet, within the Latin School originated the movement which finally resulted in an effective reform of the language. This was due to a man who combined profound philological learning with critical acumen, good taste, poetic gift and a faculty for clear expression and the coining of new words. Trained originally as a theologian, Sveinbjörn Egilsson, after taking his university degree, was appointed teacher of Greek and Latin in the Bessastaðir School. In his teaching he adopted the practice of preparing Icelandic versions of the classical authors, read them to his pupils and required them to follow his example and accurately render the texts into correct and pure Icelandic. In 1829 he issued the first specimen of these translations in print as a program of the school, covering the first books of the *Odyssey*, and ten years later the whole epic had been published in this manner. It is no exaggeration to say that this translation initiated a new epoch in the history of the language—holding a similar position for its time as Oddur Gottskálksson's New Testament for the preceding period. Perhaps it was fortunate that Sveinbjörn Egilsson selected a metrical work for a prose translation, because in doing so he was more independent of the original and could shape the sentences more freely according to the demands of the Icelandic language as expressed in the best prose literature with which he was so thoroughly familiar, but he never slavishly imitated his models or resorted to archaisms. His prose version of the *Iliad* was issued posthumously, and at the time of his death he was engaged upon a metrical translation of the two poems, but this he left unfinished. He translated various other works by Greek authors, but his versions have never been printed.³

The Homeric poems lend themselves well to a rendering into Icelandic, which is rich in heroic literature. Still none but a

¹ See e.g. Páll Melsteð, *Endurminningar*. 1912, pp. 29–30.

² Letter to Grímur Jónsson, April 4, 1810 (Ólsen, *R. K. Rask*, 1888, pp. 83–84).

³ Svb. Egilsson, *Ljóðmáli*, 1856, pp. xliv–xlv.

skilled pen can do them justice. It may not be necessary to form very many new nouns for things which occur in them, but the numerous epithets and names require a skilful and delicate handling, and in treating them our translator showed himself a master. To enumerate many of these would take too much space; suffice it to mention a few like *glóeyg*, *fárhugaður*, *rósfingraður*, *margráður*, *röðrargjarn*, *goðumlíkur*, *landaskelfir*, *ægisskjalda*, *skýbólstraguð*, and so on. His intimate knowledge of the skaldic poetry stood him in good stead when forming new words or compounds. It is, however, not only the choice of words which gives his prose version its great linguistic value; there are also the style and the construction of sentences. Here for the first time in a modern work the sentences are short and simple in conformity with the character and the best traditions of the Icelandic language. It is unquestionably true what was said at the bier of the translator by two of his pupils, that there never was a man who had entered so fully into the spirit of the language as he, or who wrote it better.¹

In raising the standard within the school Sveinbjörn Egilsson had the able support of his learned colleague, Dr. Hallgrímur Scheving who collected much material for a dictionary of the modern language.² A new era was also dawning in poetry, as was evident from the poems of Bjarni Þórarensen, which had occasionally appeared in the *Sagnablöð* and *Klausturþósturinn*. They showed a strong influence from the Eddic poems; the *fornyrðislag* was frequently used; the easy form, rhythm, fluency and choice language made his poetry conspicuous in the first decades of the nineteenth century. He had also the gift of forming new words and expressions, which give evidence of keen observation and fertile imagination.³

Sveinbjörn Egilsson's activity was entirely that of a scholar; beyond a few poems which from time to time appeared in the periodical press, he wrote hardly anything for the general public. It therefore became the task of his pupils to bring his teachings before the people. The first to do this was Baldvin Einarsson

¹ Ásmundur Jónsson and Pétur Pétursson, in *Reður flútar við jarðarför Subj. Egilssonar*, 1855, pp. 13, 24.

² Cf. *Íslendingur* II, 1862, p. 160; *Pjóðulfur* XIV, 1862, p. 40.

³ Finnur Jónsson, 'Um skáldamál Bjarna Þórarensens,' in *Ársrit hins íslenskra Fræðafélags* I, 1916, pp. 109–117.

in the pages of the *Armann & Alþingi*.¹ He wished to impress upon its readers the necessity of using pure language in speech and writing, and he held up to ridicule those persons who imitated foreigners and took pride in using foreign phrases.² But his style is not always good, there is something affected and forced about it, besides containing many impurities.

The decisive step in the language reform was taken with the publication of the *Fjölnir* which commenced to appear in 1835.³ The editors of it not only preached but practiced as well. It is throughout one of the best written books in modern Icelandic, and may constantly serve as a linguistic model. It impressed upon readers what a precious possession the language was and how important it was to preserve it and develop it, and the editors showed that the existence of the nation, its independence politically and intellectually, depended upon the language; without a language of their own the inhabitants of Iceland might be looked upon as a province of Denmark, with it they were a separate nation and had a right to demand that they be treated as such. Thus to combine the political and linguistic questions was of the greatest importance. Konráð Gíslason's paper in volume four⁴ meets all the arguments which had been brought forth by those who found fault with the mother tongue and considered it undeveloped and inadequate as a modern medium; the fault, he points out, lies with the critics and not with the language. Most persuasive are, perhaps, his introductory words to the reviews in volume six⁵; they are written with such feeling and earnestness that they must touch even the most indifferent. The editors also used the effective weapon of ridicule, as in the skit called *Sagan af Arnabirni og mér*,⁶ a take-off on the language of *Sunnanpósturinn*; and in the review written in the same bad language as the book which is reviewed.⁷ On the whole the reviews in the *Fjölnir* are almost exclusively

¹ H. Hermannsson, *The periodical literature of Iceland*, 1918, pp. 38–42.

² The character Önundur.—Tómas Sæmundsson thinks, however, that the language was not much better in the author's (and his chief character, Sighvatur's) home district, cf. *Fjölnir I*, 1835, pp. 92–93.

³ H. Hermannsson, *The periodical literature of Iceland*, 1918, pp. 42–48.

⁴ 'Ágrip af ræðu áhrærandi íslenskuna,' in *Fjölnir IV*, 1838, pp. 19–28.

⁵ *Fjölnir VII*, 1844, pp. 71–74.

⁶ *Fjölnir II*, 1836, pp. 57–58.

⁷ *Fjölnir VI*, 1843, pp. 61–62.

of a linguistic character, pointing out the flaws in grammar, vocabulary and style—a thing which never before had been done with so much knowledge and effect.

Most severe treatment was accorded to the popular poetry called *rimur*, which, as mention above, had flourished since the fifteenth century. The most prominent poet of this genre at the time was Sigurður Breiðfjörð, an uneducated man of undoubted poetic talent but slipshod and uncritical; the market was flooded with his productions. In volume three of the *Fjölnir*, Jónas Hallgrímsson chose this poet's *Rimur af Tistrani og Indlönu* as the subject of a long article wherein he laid bare all the offences against language and good taste of which the poet was guilty. In a most systematic way the reviewer enumerated the faulty words and classified them so as to leave no doubt in the minds of the reader.¹ But this treatment of their favorite poet angered the people, and made the periodical and the reviewer unpopular, but such nevertheless was the force of his criticism that the *rimur*-poetry never rallied from it, and since that time it has been on the decline until now it is practically a thing of the past. In a later volume Gísli Thórarensen gave a similar overhauling to the same author's *Ljóðasmámunir*.² The *Fjölnir* could afford to be so severe in its attacks on the poetry of the day since it provided the public with poems which excelled anything so far published in Modern Icelandic. Jónas Hallgrímsson's exquisite language was on a level with his poetic imagination and fine taste, and few poets have expressed more beautifully their love for the language in which they wrote than did he in the love poem *Ásta*.³

Many neologisms were introduced in the pages of the *Fjölnir*, some of which, however, have found no permanent place in the language; such are *þjóðeignafræði*, political economy; *eintili*, singular, and *fleirtili*, plural. Others met with an immediate acceptance, like *súrefni*, oxygen, and various zoological and geological terms (*lindýr*, *liðdýr*, *spendýr*, etc.). But the purism was carried to excess in the translating of foreign names, as was generally done when their meaning could be ascertained; at

¹ *Fjölnir* III, 1837, pp. 18-29.

² *Fjölnir* VI, 1843, pp. 62-65.

³ First printed in *Fjölnir* VI, 1843, p. 15.—Cf. the characterization of Jónas Hallgrímsson's language in Grímur Thomsen's obituary poem, in *Ný félagsrit* VI, 1845, pp. 152-153.

other times their sound was imitated so as to give a special significance to them in Icelandic. Among such may be mentioned *Góðvik*, Bombay; *Svartá*, Indus; *Miklibotn*, Bengal; *Höggormasveit*, Cutch; *Slétumannaland*, Poland; *Lithaugaland*, Lithuania, and numerous others. This, of course, was a passing phase of the purism, nor were these words generally used by others than their authors. Yet the principal importance of the *Fjölnir* does not lie in the new words it introduced, but in its influence upon style. After its appearance no book written in foreign, clumsy style could be issued in print. The editors had elevated and educated the taste of the people, and awakened the popular feeling for the printed word. To their attempts in reforming the spelling I shall return below.

The *Fjölnir* was printed in Latin type and did much to further the use of that type in Icelandic publications. This seems therefore the proper place to trace briefly the history of the Gothic and Latin types in Icelandic printing. The former had been used from the beginning of printing in Iceland, and it was exceptional to find Icelandic books printed with the other type; such books were almost always printed abroad. In his *Vejledning* of 1811, Rask deplored that in some Icelandic sagas, printed in Copenhagen, the Latin characters had been used, and contended that it was contrary to old as well as modern practice.¹ In the Swedish edition of 1818, he completely changed front, condemned the Gothic type, which he called the German monkish type, and advocated the use of the Latin type which from the very beginning of Icelandic literature had been adapted to the language.² It was according to his wish that the Icelandic Literary Society chose the latter for its publications and only very few of its books were printed with Gothic characters. In 1830 Rask issued in Icelandic a *Lestrarkver handa heldri manna börnum* and had it printed in Latin characters in order to make children accustomed to them, because, he said, they were older, more original, prettier, and more commonly used among educated people than the Gothic ones, although both were originally derived from the same source.³ This spelling-book apparently was

¹ *Vejledning*, p. 3.

² *Anvisning*, pp. 4–6.—See also his letter to Bjarni Thorsteinsson, Aug. 1, 1817 (Olsen, *R. K. Rask*, 1888, pp. 73–78, cf. pp. 109–110); Svb. Egilsson's letter to H. Rask, Oct. 14, 1836 (*Dania* IV, p. 139).

³ Preface, p. 3; cf. also Rask, *Samlede Afhandlinger*, III, 1838, pp. 3–4.

never much used in Iceland. Hence the editors of the *Fjölnir* took up the matter, repeated Rask's arguments in an article in volume eight,¹ strongly advocating the use of the Latin type, and enumerating many reasons in its favor and against the other style. From that time on the use of the Gothic type declined except in religious books, where it remained common for a few decades, as the people at large favored it and looked askance at the Latin type which sometimes was popularly styled the heathen type (*heiðna letrið*).² It has now been entirely abandoned in Icelandic printing.

The language of the pulpit and in works on religion always follows largely that of the Bible, and since for nearly three centuries no changes of any consequence were made in the earliest versions of the New Testament or the whole Bible, no improvement took place in the style of religious works down to the end of the eighteenth century, when Magnús Stephensen and his associates began to weed out the objectionable phrases in such books. Their criticism was, however, more of a literary and æsthetic character than linguistic. The demand for a revision of the Bible was at that period made by various theologians as well as others, and critical essays on and versions of different books of the Bible were published.³ At the same time a new edition of the New Testament was issued in 1807, without any alterations for the better,⁴ and one of the whole Bible in 1813,⁵ and certainly neither of them marked any step forward. After the foundation of the Icelandic Bible Society in 1816, a revision of the Bible was decided upon, and with the assistance of Sveinbjörn Egilsson, Rev. Árni Helgason and others, a new translation of the New Testament was issued under the auspices of the society at Viðey in 1827, and one of the whole Bible in 1841. This version was in great many respects an improvement upon the earlier ones, and contributed to a change in style of theological

¹ 'Um latínuletrið,' *Fjölnir* VIII, 1845, pp. 28–33.

² Svbj. Hallgrímsson, *Nýtt stafrófskver handa minni manna börnum*, 1853, pp. 31–32.

³ Jón Ólafsson's essay on the Prophets in *Rit þess ísl. Lærðómslistafélag*. I ff., and others.

⁴ See Árni Helgason's review in *Kjøbenhavnske lærde Efterretninger*, 1808, pp. 491–496, G. Thorkelin's reply (pp. 16), publ. as supplement to No. 32, and A. Helgason's rejoinder, pp. 525–528.

⁵ On account of a misprint in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, generally known as the *Harmagrúts-bíbla*.

and devotional publications. Even in this field the editors of the *Fjölnir* were active, as three of them translated into Icelandic Bishop Mynster's *Hugleiðingar um höfuðatriði kristinnar trúar*, which was printed in 1839 and which is distinguished from other works by an unusually pure and choice language. The numerous devotional books from the pen of Dr. Pétur Pétursson which were now to follow did much to reform the language in this literature, although one may frequently find in them words which a purist would object to; but some of these words are now so rooted in the language that people are loth to part with them. Another revision of the New Testament was published in 1863, and one of the whole Bible in 1866, and, notwithstanding the thunderings of Dr. Guðbrandur Vigfússon to the contrary, this was without doubt superior in many ways to the earlier ones.¹ A new critical version of the Bible by Professor Haraldur Níelsson and others appeared in 1908 under the auspices of the Bible Society. From a linguistic point of view it is unquestionably more satisfactory than the others, although it has not escaped adverse criticism, chiefly from conservative people who object to innovations and to the substitution of new phrases for old and established ones.²

We shall now return to the legal and official language.³ The rescript of 1751, which was referred to above and which directed

¹ Guðbrandur Vigfússon, *A few parallel specimens from the first three gospels*, Oxford, May 17, 1869, 4° pp. 4; rev. by Jón Bjarnason, in *Baldur* II, 1869, pp. 54–55, 58–59, 81.—Pétur Pétursson, *A letter from the Right Rev. P. Pétursson, to G. Vigfússon Esq.* Reykjavík, June 19, 1869, 8° pp. 2.—G. Vigfússon, in *Pjóðölfur* XXII, 1870, pp. 106–107; P. Pétursson, pp. 114–115, 117–118 (also sep. repr.: *Til Íslendinga. Svar til Guðbr. Vigfússonar um þóðing á Nýja Testamentinu*. Reykjavík, 1870, 4° pp. 4); G. Vigfússon's reply, p. 154, and XXIII, 1870, p. 14, with P. Pétursson's rejoinder.—Eiríkur Magnússon, in *Norðanfari* IX, 1870, pp. 67–68, 71–72; X, 1871, pp. 58–59, 61–62 108 (cf. *Pjóðölfur* XXIII, 1870, p. 185; XXIV, 1872, pp. 49, 154–155).—See also P. Thoroddsen, *Æfisaga Pjeturs Pjeturssonar*, 1908, pp. 209–218, and *Andvari* XIX, 1895, pp. 20–22, 39–40.

² Halldór Kr. Friðriksson, in *Frikkirkjan* II, 1890, pp. 18–23; Jón Helgason, in *Verði ljós* V, 1900, pp. 61–62; H. Kr. Fr., in *Frikkirkjan* II, pp. 72–73 (cf. p. 87); Haraldur Níelsson, in *Verði ljós* V, pp. 88–94, 104–110; H. Kr. Fr., in *Frikkirkjan* II, pp. 122–125, 138–143.—Various books had been printed separately before the whole Bible was issued in 1908; this was withdrawn from circulation because of objection on religious grounds to certain phrases, and a new edition published in 1912.

³ See Jón Guðmundsson, 'Um mál vort Íslendinga,' in *Nýfélagsrit* IX, 1849, pp. 69–85, and XI, 1851, pp. 54–63; S. J., 'Um rétt íslenzkrar tungu,' *ibid.* XXIII, 1863, pp. 74–89; and also XVIII, 1858, pp. 71–78.—'Um móður-málið,' in *Reykjavíkurþósturinn* I, 1847, pp. 49–55.—*Norðanfari* III, 1864, pp. 43–44.

that all laws be published in Danish and Icelandic, was not lived up to. Only a few of the laws dating from the latter half of the eighteenth century were issued in Icelandic, and the little that was done we owe to the influence of Jón Eiríksson.¹ With the establishment of the National Superior Court by the ordinance of July 11, 1800, definite rules were given as to the language used in the proceedings of the court; this was to be the native tongue, and only in exceptional cases could the court resort to Danish.² The court carried this out to the letter, but the lower courts frequently used Danish; in some cases Danish seems to have been insisted upon, even when there was no urgent reason for it.³ By government letters of Aug. 2, 1800, and May 14, 1803, it became the duty of the judges of the Superior Court to see to it that the laws were translated into Icelandic and published, and from time to time collections of laws and ordinances were actually printed in Icelandic under the auspices of the court. Magnús Stephensen, the chief justice, also wrote much on legal topics for the instruction of the lower officials and the common people. But unfortunately there was often an uncertainty as to what laws were to be extended to Iceland and enforced there, and even the judges of the highest court in the country appear sometimes to have been in doubt or entirely at a loss on that point. Therefore the government took upon itself the task of deciding the question and of seeing to it that the laws were promulgated in the country,⁴ but the Icelandic officials often showed themselves indifferent, and neglected to carry out the government order to acquaint the public with the laws in Icelandic; these were to be read at popular assemblies in the spring and autumn. There were cases where the laws had been proclaimed to the people only in Danish, a language they did not understand, with the consequence that the Superior Court as well as the Danish Supreme Court declined to enforce laws which had not been promulgated in Icelandic.⁵ A government letter of June 25, 1831, ordered that all laws for Iceland

¹ *Tíðindi frá Alþingi* 1847, pp. 107–108.

² Forordning angaaende Landsoverretten i Island, 11. Juli 1800, § 16 (*Lovs. f. Isl.* VI, pp. 471–472).

³ See an instance of this mentioned in *Ný félagsrit* VII, pp. 229–230.

⁴ Letter of June 16, 1821.

⁵ For a case, see *Ný félagsrit* VIII, pp. 167–175.

be printed in Danish and Icelandic as soon as they were issued, and Professor Finnur Magnússon was appointed official translator (July 16, 1831). His work was unsatisfactory, for two reasons. He had insufficient juridical training for the task, and secondly, his style was poor, and that caused dissatisfaction especially at this period when the language reform was discussed. Still it was better for people to have the laws in bad Icelandic than in Danish which was unintelligible to them. When the Icelandic Department was established in Copenhagen in 1848, it became one of its duties to translate the laws, but meanwhile the question had taken on a different aspect.

When the Committee of Government Officials met in Reykjavík in 1839 and 1841,¹ they used the Danish language exclusively at their meetings.² To be accessible to the people, their proceedings had therefore to be translated into Icelandic which, according to the editors' statement in the preface, was in various way a difficult task, because so many terms occurred there for which no equivalents were to be found in the language. It seems, however, that they exaggerated the difficulty, yet the secretaries who prepared the proceedings for the press did not succeed in effacing the Danish from the text, even in cases where it ought to have been easy.³ In the ordinance of March 8, 1843, re-establishing the Althing as a consultative assembly, it was provided that the bills proposed by the government were to be presented to it in Danish and Icelandic, and it was permitted that the representative of the Crown, when he had not a full command of Icelandic, might address the body in Danish, but otherwise all the proceedings should be in Icelandic and the minutes recorded in that language; a Danish version or summary of them, verified by the speaker and the secretary, was to be sent to the government in Copenhagen.⁴ During the second session of the Althing, in 1847, Jón Sigurðsson introduced a resolution proposing that the Icelandic text of the laws for Iceland be signed by the king and be accompanied by a Danish translation. The government refused to do this, and similar

¹ H. Hermannsson, *The periodical literature of Iceland*, 1918, pp. 54-55.

² Cf. *Reykjavíkurþósturinn* I, 1847, p. 53.

³ Thus they write 'Stiptprófastur Helgasen,' 'Sýslumaður Johnsen,' etc., instead of using the Icelandic proper names.

⁴ *Forordning om Althingets Indretning*, 8. Marts 1843, § 43 (*Lovs. f. Isl.* XII, pp. 482-483).

resolutions were therefore passed by successive sessions, until in 1859 a compromise was finally arrived at, according to which the king should sign both the Danish and the Icelandic texts, thus placing them on an equal footing,¹ and so the matter stood for a long time. In 1887, again a resolution to the effect that the Icelandic text only be signed by the king, was introduced and passed by the Althing, and this was repeated during the session of 1889. At last the government found it opportune to listen to the wishes of the legislative body, and laid before the session of 1891 a bill providing that the Icelandic text be signed by the king and be published together with a verified Danish version; this became a law.² Thus the supremacy of the Icelandic over the Danish language was in the end legally and fully acknowledged. Until 1912 the Icelandic law reports (*Stjórnartíðindi fyrir Ísland*) contained both the text and the translation, but since that time only the Icelandic original has been printed there. It was deemed to be unnecessary to include there the Danish translation which is for the use of the Danish government and the Danish Supreme Court, the latter having been down to present date the court of last instance in Icelandic cases.

The opposition of the government to this measure was not due to any desire on its part to suppress or harm the Icelandic language. The Danes have never aimed at anything of the kind; on the contrary, the Copenhagen government rather encouraged the use of it at various times. Thus in 1753 a rescript permitted the people of Iceland to send petitions and complaints to the king in their own language, but they seemingly never availed themselves of the privilege. The Icelanders themselves showed indifference and carelessness in the matter, and continued without murmur to use Danish in their official communications and public documents. Still the government is not free from blame, because time and again it filled positions in Iceland with Danes who neither wrote nor talked nor even tolerably well understood the Icelandic language. In 1844, it was finally decreed that those who were candidates for an office

¹ Kongelig Resolution angaaende Kongens Underskrift under Lovenes islandske Text, 27 Mai 1859 (*Lovs. f. Isl.* XVII, pp. 482-487).

² Lög No. 12, 18. sept. 1891.—As to the importance attached to this measure, see Ben. Sveinsson's speech in the *Alþingistíðindi* 1891, B, coll. 422-423; cf. also *Skýrni* LXXXV, 1911, pp. 220-222.

in Iceland must show that they both understood the language and could make themselves understood in it. The evil was not removed by this, as the supervision was lax and it was easy to evade the rescript, and the matter was finally taken up by the Althing together with another related question. In 1848, a docent position in Icelandic was created at the University of Copenhagen; its first occupant was Konráð Gíslason, and four years later it was ordered that he should examine the candidates for Icelandic offices as to their linguistic attainments; this was afterwards also delegated to the teacher of Icelandic in the Reykjavík Latin School; the examinations should be both written and oral and held in public.¹ The constitution of 1874 (§ 4) provided that no one might hold an official position in Iceland unless he had the requisite knowledge of the native tongue, and it has therefore of late been practically impossible for any one to accept office there without living up to these requirements.

To get rid of Danish in public documents was another question. In 1840, Páll Þórðarson Melsteð had suggested that all letters of government officials should be written in Icelandic, and if they had to be sent to the government in Copenhagen, should be translated by a specially appointed translator.² This was not heeded at the time, and the Althing also stepped in and discussed the matter but without accomplishing anything.³ Curiously enough it was the unpopular Danish governor-general Count Trampe who first took up the practice of writing letters to the prefects in Icelandic; this was in 1850, but it was some time before it became a general and established custom to use Icelandic exclusively in official letters and communications. The inheritance and traditions of the Danish period can still be traced in the style of public documents at the present time, the so-called *kansellistýll*, but it is becoming less noticeable of late. This style of writing has also found its way into other publications, as officials who had become thoroughly imbued with it could hardly manage to write without resorting to it.

The overland mail system was originally organized for the use of the government, and all the routes had their terminus

¹ See the rescript of April 8, 1844; letter, Oct. 30, 1852, and resolutions of May 27, 1857, II § 9, and of Feb. 8, 1863.

² Páll P. Melsteð, *Brjef til Jóns Sigurðssonar*, 1913, pp. 8-9.

³ *Tíðindi frá Alþingi* 1849, pp. 34-38, 443-462, 517-525, 567-578.

at the governor-general's residence, first at Bessastaðir and later in Reykjavík. All the records relating to the system were thus kept in Danish, and as the mails became used by the people in general, letters were frequently addressed in Danish, even when written by private individuals. The names of the addressees were Danicized and even the place names, and it was not always easy to unravel the strange forms which they appeared in.¹ This ludicrous habit was not abandoned until after the middle of the nineteenth century; but then it also quickly disappeared.

The national revival in the thirties and forties set its mark upon the educational system. The Latin School was transferred from Bessastaðir to Reykjavík in 1846, changes were made in the curriculum, and the mother tongue received more attention.² In the beginning ten hours weekly were devoted to it, but in course of time this was gradually increased until at present there are twenty-five hours weekly. Works of the old literature have been principally read, but also a few modern ones, of which the *Fjölnir* was the first to be used. Among the most serious problems of the school has always been the lack of text-books in Icelandic, foreign ones being used in practically every line. A few Icelandic text-books there were, such as Fischer's *Eðlisfræði*, translated by Magnús Grímsson, and several works by Halldór Kr. Friðriksson. This enterprising man and able teacher has rendered services of great importance to his native language which he taught for nearly half a century. As soon as he became connected with the school he began to write Icelandic text-books to be used there, of geography and the languages, such as his Icelandic, Danish, and German grammars. When Bjarni Johnsen, the rector, asked, in 1860, the government for an appropriation of a few hundred *ríxdalir*, with a view of publishing text-books, his application was denied on the advice of J. N. Madvig.³ Afterwards small sums were granted, in 1866, to publish a Latin grammar, and in 1868 for a Latin reader with glossary; these, however, were principally intended for students who were preparing for college, but they are linguistically important,

¹ *Reykjavíkurþósturinn I*, 1847, p. 55.

² Reglement for Latinskolen, 30. Mai 1846, §§ 4, 11; Universitetsplan og Examensbestemmelser for den lærde Skole i Reykevíg, 30. Juli 1850, §§ 4, 11.

³ See *Lovs. f. Isl. X*, pp. 20–23.

especially the grammar, which has contributed much to philosophical terminology in Icelandic. For the last quarter of a century or so, the Althing has appropriated a certain sum annually to be used for the publishing of text-books in higher education. The elementary schools have for many years been supplied with text-books in the mother tongue; these are smaller and easier to produce and have a larger market. But in these schools Danish books were formerly used; and down to the middle of the nineteenth century most of the instruction in the Reykjavík grammar school was in Danish.¹

Under such conditions, and when it is remembered that most of the professional training was obtained in the University of Copenhagen, one is not surprised to find that the educated class bears the responsibility for a great part of the impurities which have disfigured the colloquial language. And in addition, another very influential class, that is the merchants, their agents and clerks, were in large measure foreigners or trained abroad, and had an imperfect knowledge of the language, or, when natives, had no feeling for it.² Down to the middle of the nineteenth century all book-keeping was in Danish; then a change took place, and merchants began to send circulars about their merchandize and prizes to the rural districts in Icelandic;³ but it is within the memory of middle age men that bills in Danish were sent from some commercial houses to the farmers. For these reasons, both the capital and the smaller towns along the coast have been notorious for their slovenly and corrupt speech, abounding in Danicisms and other foreign elements. These were often used for the most every-day things, and the Icelandic equivalents either neglected or used in an inferior meaning. Thus to mention only one example, the word *kokkhús* (from Danish *Kökken*) was used in Reykjavík for kitchen, while the Icelandic term *eldhús* or *eldahús* was applied to kitchen in a farmhouse. This kind of speech has been ridiculed and satirized by writers at various times.⁴ The more intelligent part of the

¹ *Ný félagsrit* IX, p. 82.

² Cf. *Fjölnir* I, 1835, pp. 92–93.

³ *Nordanfari* XI, p. 61.

⁴ In addition to the speeches by Önundur in *Ármanн á Alþingi*, one might mention Guðm. Torfason, *Reykjavíkurbragur hinn eldri og ýngri* (from ca. 1840–50), 1913, pp. 5, 6, 8; Jón Thoroddsson, *Kvæði*, 1871, p. 261 (*Málskrúð í Eyjafirði*, 1840), and others.

country population has also scorned it, but there have always been individuals among them who were eager to reveal their familiarity with the towns by imitating the speech, and foreign words have thus crept into rural parlance and enjoyed there an existence, often *à la* Mrs. Malaprop. There has been a change for the better in later years with the awakening of national feeling, but not all is well as yet, if one is to give credence to the cries of anguish which occasionally are uttered over existing conditions in the capital.¹

From the merchants we come to the seamen. The old Icelandic was rich in nautical terms and phrases relating to ships and seafaring, as was to be expected, since the Scandinavians were the foremost sailors of the Middle Ages. But the time came when the Icelanders ceased to sail the oceans and their activities on the sea were limited to fishing in small open crafts along the coasts of their island. In consequence, many words concerning shipping and sailing were forgotten, and in the meantime progress was taking place throughout the world in navigation, big sailing vessels were built, and steamships came into existence, but all this found no expressions in the Icelandic language. When at last large decked vessels were introduced for fishing instead of the open boats, there were no native words for many things connected with them, and the sailors seem principally to have fallen back on Danish or Norwegian terms, usually slightly modified.² A specimen of this language is found in Sveinbjörn Á. Egilsson's *Leiðarvisir í sjómensku* (1906);³ it shows clearly that the descendants of the old Vikings use terms and phrases which leave very much to be desired. But this will gradually change. When seafaring and navigation are treated in print care is taken to avoid impurities and to use new words, wherever that is possible, or to revive old terms. This is especially noticeable in government publications and in the different laws which have been issued in later years concerning shipping.⁴ Besides, the existence of a monthly paper devoted

¹ Cf. *Skírnir* LXXXIX, p. 94; *Ísafold* XLVI, 1919, No. 10.

² See Pétur Guðmundsson, 'Um lagfæringu á sjómannamáli voru, einkum viðvíkjandi þilskipum og áttavita,' in *Nordanfari* XVI, 1877, pp. 141-142, 145-146.

³ Reviewed by Dr. Valtýr Guðmundsson, in *Eimreiðin* XII, 1907, pp. 147-149.

⁴ E.g., the 'siglingalög' of Nov. 30, 1914, and many others. See also *Almanak handa íslenskum fiskimönum*, published under the auspices of the government since 1915.

to fishing and nautical topics (*Ægir*, since 1905), and the presence of a school of navigation in Reykjavík, established in 1890, for the needs of which text-books in the native tongue will by and by be supplied—all this will help to develop the language in this field and uproot the foreign terms as far as is practicable. On the other hand the every-day speech of Icelandic sailors is probably purer than that of their brethren of other nationalities, which always has been a by-word for impurity. An example of international sailor language is to be found in Fáskrúðsfjörður in East-Iceland, long the favorite haunt of foreign fishermen; this is known as *Flandramál*, and is a conglomerate of Dutch, English, French, and Icelandic. It is mostly used by the natives and French fishermen; the former, in using it, think they are talking French, the latter that they are conversing in Icelandic; the conversation goes on splendidly and each party understands the other to perfection.¹ Unfortunately no one has as yet carefully investigated this curious jargon.

It has sometimes been maintained that there were no dialects in Iceland. This is not quite correct although the linguistic differences in the various parts of the country are nowhere of such a character as to cause any difficulty to the inhabitants in understanding one another. These differences, however, have distinctly the marks of dialects. Such is, for instance, the pronunciation of vowels in the southwestern part of the island, which is more open than elsewhere. In the northwestern province they pronounce *a* before *ng* as *a*, while in the other parts it is always pronounced as *á*, a lengthening which dates from the sixteenth century; in the same province they also say *d* for *ð*. In the Northland *hv* is pronounced as *kv*, and the consonants are as a rule harder there than elsewhere. Then there are several words which are peculiar to certain provinces; but the whole matter has not been studied as it deserves.² It is probable that certain changes in sounds which have taken place in the language during earlier centuries have originated as dialectic differences, and have gradually spread over the country. Such is,

¹ See *Andvari* IX, 1883, p. 41; *Geografisk Tidsskrift* VII, 1884, p. 105; *Iðunn* I, 1915, pp. 153–154.

² Marius Hægstad, 'Er der bygdemaal paa Island?', in *Kringsjaa* XVIII, 1910, pp. 41–43; Ol. Olavius, *Oeconomisk Reise igennem de nordvestlige, nordlige og nordøstlige Kanter af Island*. Kjöbenhavn, 1780. II, pp. 637–639, § 244; Eggert Ólafsson, *Reise*, etc. Soroe 1772. I, pp. 464–465, § 600.

e.g., the change *é-je* which apparently was common in the North-land before it extended to other parts, as mentioned above.

The progress of the language reform from the forties on was rapid. Konráð Gíslason's plea had not been in vain; it became clear to the people that the language was one of the important factors in their struggle for independence, and that it was their duty to take good care of it. The literary output increased and represented a greater variety of subjects. Political, economical, and other questions of national importance were discussed more widely and freely, and many of the leading men, above all Jón Sigurðsson, set a good example by their style and clear unaffected language. Periodicals became more numerous and newspapers came into existence. All this enriched the language and gave it a greater flexibility. And now the speech as it had lived on the lips of the people and where it had been best preserved, was seen on the printed page. Among the most important works in this respect which saw the light near the middle of the century, was Jón Árnason and Magnús Grímsson's *Íslensk æfintýri* (1852), and especially the larger edition, Jón Árnason's *Íslenskar þjóðsögur og æfintýri* (1862-64). Here stories were told in a natural, straightforward and simple manner, abounding in pithy phrases and idiomatic expressions. This revived the narrative style in which the Icelanders of old had excelled and which throughout centuries had more or less been preserved in popular storytelling.¹ About the same time novel-writing began. In 1850 Jón Thoroddsens *Piltur og stúlka*, a charming peasant story, was published, to be followed a score of years later by his unfinished *Maður og kona*. This form of literature has since developed to a high state in Iceland, especially during the last quarter of a century, and as to style probably has found its best expression in the novels and short stories of Einar Hjörleifsson Kvaran.

Of other prose works which contributed to the improvement of style and the raising of the literary taste, special mention is due to Steingrímur Thorsteinsson's translation of the Arabian Nights (*Púsund og ein nött*, 1857-64). The standard set by Sveinbjörn Egilsson in his rendering of the Homeric poems was

¹ Similar was the case in Norway. 'Al god stil i Norge siden—baade paa riksmaal og landsmaal—har sine forudsætninger i eventyrene. Eventyrstilen hos Asbjørnsen og Moe var bygget paa det folkelige fortællemaal og dagligtalen,' Seip, *En liten norsk sproghistorie*, 2. Opl., 1916, p. 34.

here lived up to, but this work had a wider influence, as it reached a greater number of readers than either the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad*. The classical narrative style was at the same time successfully imitated in the historical works of Páll Pálsson Melsteð (*Fornaldarsagan*, 1864; *Miðaldarsagan*, 1866; and *Nýja sagan*, 1868–87), which at once became extremely popular with lay and learned; they were welcome to a people who always have been eager for historical knowledge. The annual *Skírnir*¹ must also be taken into account; it recorded current events year by year and was as a rule well written, and in its pages many neologisms are to be found relating to modern history and innovations; these were at times rather farfetched and some may be characterized by the slang word *torf*; the style was likewise now and then strained.²

After the *Fjölnir* movement the changes in poetic form and diction were perhaps more marked than the reform of the prose. We can properly dispense with considering here the *rímur*-poetry which merely as a survival of the past lingered on for sometime. Stricter demands were now made to all kinds of poetry in form and contents. The adherence to the time honored rules of rhyme and alliteration was in no way relaxed, and so far no poet has successfully been able to break away from them. New metres have been introduced,³ and the poetic language is still rich in words which seldom or never appear in prose, but the so-called Eddic embellishments, or circumlocutions of the old style, so popular and often so abused formerly, have now nearly disappeared from recent poems.⁴ The last century numbered many poets of the first rank, but as to output poetry does not now fill the same place in Icelandic belles-lettres which it once occupied.

¹ H. Hermannsson, *The periodical literature of Iceland*, etc. 1918, pp. 32–35.

² An excessive purism, combined with archaism, is found in one publication of this period, viz., Gísli Magnússon and Jón Porkelsson's *Pjöning bréfa Hórazar* (1864), of which only the first part appeared. Cf. Jón Sigurðsson, *Bréf*, 1911, p. 354.

³ Finnur Jónsson, *Stutt íslensk bragfræði*, 1892, 8° pp. 82;—Jóhannes L. L. Jóhannesson, 'Um ný-íslenzka bragfræði,' in *Tímarit hins ísl. Bókmentafélags* XVI, 1895, pp. 230–252.

⁴ Janus Jónsson, 'Edda í kveðskap fyr og nú,' in *Skírnir* XC, 1916, pp. 358–377.—The modern poetic language has not been investigated sufficiently; of articles dealing with the subject may be mentioned Alex. Jóhannesson's 'Um segurð kvenna í ný-íslenzkum skáldskap,' in *Edda* V, 1916, pp. 352–372.

The isolation of Iceland and the inadequate communications between it and other countries, its small population, so widely dispersed over a large island, and the lack of learned or scientific institutions deprived its literature of variety and gave it almost exclusively a popular character. Many of the early movements in the humanities and sciences, in some cases we might call them scientific superstitions, have never reached the people, or, at least, have left small or no traces in their literature and language. Thus, to mention a few instances, we find no remains in the vocabulary traceable to the theory of the Hippocratic school regarding the four elements and the humors of the human body, which has given rise to numerous expressions in other tongues; nor have astrology and other similar widespread doctrines impressed themselves upon the Icelandic language. The same holds true of more recent tendencies in natural science, philosophy, and other learned disciplines; they did not find their way into Icelandic literature except in popular form, and in such cases it was usually unnecessary to adhere strictly to technical terminology or scientific precision. But the time came when the new learning, the sciences, and mechanical arts knocked at the door and had to be admitted, not only in popular but in strictly scientific form, and then the question became acute whether a wholesale importation of foreign terms should take place, or words of native origin, if possible, invented. The latter alternative has been followed by common consent, but has frequently been difficult to live up to. Word-coining on a large scale requires skill, linguistic knowledge, imagination and felicity of expression—qualities rarely combined in one brain. But the results have been satisfactory beyond expectation; to be sure, the tradition is not established as yet, and in few cases has the experimental stage been passed. One writer refuses often to accept the terminology or words employed by another, and that is apt to cause confusion. I shall now attempt a very brief outline of what has been accomplished in this respect in different subjects.

The first attempt to establish in Icelandic a systematic scientific nomenclature was made by Oddur Hjaltalín in his work on the botany of Iceland (*Íslensk grasafræði*, 1830), but his botanical terms were, as it seems, in the main mere translations from the Danish, and have therefore found little favor with his

successors. Stefán Stefánsson contended that he could not use them, and formed a new terminology of his own in the *Flóra Íslands* (1901), later supplemented in his text-book of botany (*Plönturnar*, 1913). Numerous new botanical terms are also to be found in Helgi Jónsson's handbook of botany (*Bygging og líf plantna, grasafræði*, 1906-07). Thus the terminology of botany is firmly established in Icelandic and better than for any other branch of natural science. Most of the words are of native derivation, like *fruma*, celle, and its compounds *frymið*, *frumusafí*, and *frumuveggur*; *brum*, bud or gemma; others are modifications of foreign words, like *kím* (Danish *Kim*), coricle; *knollur* (Danish *Knold*), tuber, etc. But much work has also been done in other fields of science, beginning with the masterly translation by Jónas Hallgrímsson of G. F. Ursin's book on popular astronomy (*Stjörnufræði*, 1842), and Magnús Grímsson's of Fischer's text-book of physics (*Eðlisfræði*, 1852), and continued by the works of Benedikt S. Gröndal, Þorvaldur Thoroddsen, Bjarni Sæmundsson, and others, on geology, mineralogy, zoology and so on.

The medical nomenclature is also in process of formation. The first medical treatise printed in Icelandic was appended to the *Calendarium perpetuum*, printed at Skálholt in 1692. Since the latter half of the eighteenth century numerous popular books and essays on diseases and medical topics have appeared, but for strictly scientific works there has been no market, and the medical profession has depended upon foreign publications, chiefly Danish and German, and these have been used for instruction in the Medical School which was established in Reykjavík in 1876. A systematic effort to substitute native terms for foreign in the class room takes its beginning about twenty years later when Guðmundur Björnsson, the present surgeon-general, became connected with the school. Hitherto these have, however, seldom been seen in print. Since 1915 the Medical Society of Reykjavík has published a monthly, *Læknablaðið*, an organ for the medical profession, containing scientific treatises and communications, the first work of its kind in the language. This reveals the fact that reports of a strictly professional character can not be given without an extensive use of foreign terms, and it is to be feared that an attempt to avoid them and instead resorting to Icelandic neologisms on a large scale may lead to misunderstanding and other difficulties,

and thus be undesirable. It has, of course, called forth expostulations from the purists.¹ There are now in use Icelandic names for the principal branches in medical science; such are, for instance, *lífsserafræði*, anatomy, but the subdivisions are styled *kerfalýsing*, systematic anatomy, *svæðalýsing*, topographical anatomy, and *lífsserameinafræði*, pathological anatomy; furthermore, *lífseðisfræði*, physiology; *sóttkveikjufraði*, bacteriology; *handlæknisfræði*, surgery; *lyflæknisfræði*, pharmacology; *lækningsfræði*, therapeutics, and so on. As an example of a successful neologism in this field, the Icelandic name for tuberculosis may be mentioned. This disease was until very recently almost unknown in Iceland, and when it occurred formerly it was generally referred to as *tæring* (Danish *Tæring*) which may, however, apply to any wasting malady. In order to give it a specific name, Professor Guðmundur Magnússon formed the word *berkill* from tubercle (formed in the same way as *biskup* from *episcopus*),² and this word, although of foreign derivation sounds Icelandic and goes well into compounds, such as *berklaveikur*, tubercular, *berklaveiki*, tuberculosis, and others. From this it is clear that in word-coinage it is not so important to use native material as to find words which look and sound well and have a indigenous appearance whatever root they are made from. *Berkill* looks just as much at home in the language as, for instance, *ferill* and similar words.

In philosophy and cognate subjects much has been done of late. Arnljótur Ólafsson endeavored in 1891 to fix the terminology of logic,³ but his suggestions have not been followed. But recently Dr. Águst H. Bjarnason, has devised a systematic nomenclature of logic (*Almenn rökfræði*, 1913) and of psychology (*Almenn sálarfræði*, 1916, and his treatise of 1918 *Um tilfinningarlífið*) as a glance at the vocabulary appended to these two works will show. His popular work on the history of human thought (*Yfirlit yfir sögu mansandans*, four volumes, 1908–15) as well as Dr. Guðmundur Finnbogason's popular lectures and essays on philosophical topics (such as *Hugur og heimur*, 1912; *Frá sjónarheimi*,⁴ 1918, and others) abound in neologisms of all

¹ Guðm. Björnsson, in *Læknablaðið* II, 1916, pp. 174–175.

² *Eimreiðin* I, 1894, p. 34.

³ ‘Rökfræði,’ in *Tímarit hins ísl. Bókmentafél.* XII, 1891, pp. 177–240.

⁴ Cf. Dr. Sigurður Nordal's review in *Eimreiðin* XXIII, 1917, pp. 73–82.

⁵ This deals with artistic and æsthetic subjects.—For musical terms cp. Holger Wiehe's article in *Skrínir* XCI, 1917, pp. 96–104.

kinds. There must, however, always be divided opinions as to the extent to which translating of technical terms may be carried, and as to the propriety and practicability of substituting native words for foreign ones which have found acceptance in virtually all civilized languages. The neologisms or substitutes often lack the quality of immediate recognition, perspicuity and precision which the foreign or international word possesses. Thus, for instance, the Icelandic term *endurreisnartímabilið* for the Renaissance is long and lacks distinction, besides it is impossible to form expressive nouns or adjectives from it. The same can often be said of names for some of the philosophical systems, although many of them are well formed. A few of them must be mentioned: *veruleikastefna*, realism; *hughyggja*, idealism; *efnishyggja*, materialism; *tvíhyggja*, dualism; *einhyggja*, monism; *fjölyhggja*, pluralism; *orkuhygga*, energetism; *skynhyggja*, sensualism; *einstaklingshyggja*, solipsism; *ókynnisteftna*, agnosticism. The nouns describing the adherents of these different doctrines have to be formed by adding the word *maður* or the ending-*andi* to the name, as *tvíhyggjumaður* or *tvíhyggjandi*, but some of these like *einstaklingshyggjumaður* and *ókynnisseftnumaður* certainly are awkward; the formation of adjectives is not easy either, still *hughyggjulegur* and *orkuhyggiulegur* are acceptable, if somewhat long. Many of the new terms are, on the other hand, excellent, and are bound to find a permanent place in the language. Such are, e.g., *aðleiðsla*, induction; *aflreiðsla*, deduction; *áatak*, action; *viðtak*, reaction; *sérstæður*, abstract; *hlutistæður*, concrete; *andúð*, antipathy; *samúð*, sympathy; *fjarhygli*, absentmindedness, with the adjective *fjarhuga*; *þráhyggja*, fixed idea; *hugsýn*, intuition; *staðorka*, potential energy; *lifsorka*, vital energy; *þanþol*, elasticity; *alhæfing*, generalisation; *alhæfur*, general; *fjarvídd*, perspective; *vélengur*, mechanical; *vildengur*, teleological, and very many others. Others must be classed as doubtful, but it is difficult to prophesy about the longevity or success of new words. Taken as a whole, the work done in this field is most remarkable, and shows, perhaps better than anything else, the richness of the language and its infinite possibilities in word-formation.

We may again take a passing glance at the legal language. There has probably been written more in Icelandic about law than on any other subject except history and religion. The

manuscript collections are swelled with legal writings of various kinds, chiefly commentaries and treatises on the ancient laws of the country. The Old Icelandic had a rich and precise legal phraseology, and most of these terms have remained in use, although temporarily, at least, many have been forgotten or replaced by Danish and Latin words or imitations. But the language has not kept abreast of the times; here as elsewhere there are lacking equivalents for numerous scientific legal terms and even for words in daily use in foreign countries. Improvements are now being made for this, so far as possible, and a legal nomenclature is now being fixed by the publication of textbooks for the use of students in the University of Iceland. The work is, of course, easier here than in the sciences, since there is a wealth of old words to choose from or to form compounds. The legislation almost yearly adds some new words to meet the new conditions which require legal sanction or control. Through such channels have obtained recognition terms like *tjekk*, check, *firma*, firm, and *procúra*, procuration, *vörumerki*, trade mark,¹ and others.

Political economy (in Icelandic *þjóðmegunarfræði*, and less appropriately also *viðskiptafræði*, or *verðmætisfræði*), political science (*stjórnfræði*), and statistics (*hagfræði*) are recent disciplines which have required many new words. The first essays on political economy appeared in the *Ný félagsrit*, and were followed by Arnjóttur Ólafsson's *Auðfræði* (1880) which contains a considerable number of new terms,² but very few of them have been used by other writers. More successful were the neologisms of Jón Ólafsson in his translation of J. S. Mill's treatise on liberty (*Um frelsið*, 1886); of these, some have been much in vogue like *sameignarmenn*, communists, *jafnaðarmenn*, socialists, and *stjórnleysingjar*, anarchists; while others, equally good or even better, as *fjöldadrottun*, mobocracy, and *frábrigðingur*, non-conformist, have rarely been heard or seen in print. There is generally some vagueness in new words for political tendencies and parties of the day which unseldom is the cause of confusion, writers, being reluctant to avail them-

¹ See laws No. 38, Nov. 8, 1901; No. 42, Nov. 13, 1903, and No. 43, Nov. 13, 1903.

² Cf. *Ísafold* VII, 1880, pp. 89-90; VIII, 1881, p. 18;—*Norðlingur* V, 1880, pp. 97-98.

selves of the foreign words, seize upon any native term which occurs to them though it may be entirely inappropriate for expressing the idea. As yet, there is no native word for politician, *þjóðmálamáður* and *stjórnmálamáður* which are much in use, are inconvenient; on the other hand the noun *pólitík* and the adjective *pólitískur* have been incorporated in the language. The different shades of political opinion and activity are expressed by words like *apturhaldsmaður*, or scornfully *apturhaldsseggur*, reactionary, with the adjective *apturhaldssamur*; *thaldsmaður*, and *thaldssamur*, conservative; *fjálslyndur*, liberal, while radical is commonly rendered by *bytingamaður*, or *byting-agjarn*, which in many cases may convey a wrong impression, *gerbótamenn* and *gerbreytingamenn* have also been used. The names of the two leading political parties in the United States have been translated into Icelandic and are often met with in print, *sérveldismenn*, Democrats, and *samveldismenn*, Republicans. Similarly Icelandic names for the most recent parties in revolutionary Russia have been seen in the newspapers, as *hákröfumenn*, Maximalists (Bolsheviks), and *lágkröfumenn*, Minimalists (Mensheviks). The expediency of such method is, however, questionable. It would seem better to adopt the foreign word in a slightly modified Icelandic form, so as to avoid all misunderstanding; and I believe there is now decidedly a tendency to follow that course, at least in the newspapers.

The material progress and mechanical devices of our age have also found appropriate words in the language. I must confine myself to mentioning only a few examples. The telegraph is *sími*, or *ritsími*, in distinction from *talsími*, telephone, and *að síma*, to telegraph or to telephone, though *að fóna*, to telephone, is also heard; *símastöð*, telegraph station; *símastjóri*, telegraph director; *símastaur*, telegraph pole; *símskeyti*, telegram, and so on. Formerly *fréttapráður* was used for telegraph, and even the forced *firðiti*, but when the telegraph came actually into use in Iceland, these words were found very inconvenient; then the old word *sími*, cord or rope, was revived and applied to the telegraph wire, following an American precedence in the use of the word 'wire'; this word has the virtue of brevity and goes well in compounds. *Bifreið* was originally used for automobile, but *bíll* seems to have gained ground of late (in imitation of Danish *Bil*, formed from the last syllable of automobile), as

shorter and more convenient in word formation: *að bila*, to ride in an automobile, *bilstöð*, *bilstjóri*, etc. The moving pictures are styled *kvíkmyndir* and find devotees in Iceland as elsewhere who frequent the *bíós* as these theatres are generally known, an abridgment of biograph theatre, a *kvíkmyndaleikhús* being too long. *Ritvél* is typewriter, *lindarpenni*, fountain-pen, and *skilvinda*, separator. Cigar and cigarette, terms of world-wide use, are seldom heard in Iceland having been replaced by *vindill* and *vindlingur*. The adoption of foreign words, slightly modified, has in many cases been found expedient, as the various names of the metric system which have been sanctioned by law: *metri* (*desímetri*, etc.), *ari*, *litri*, and *gramm*,¹ this, of course, does not pass without protests from the purists.² The recent development of the Icelandic trade, which at last has now chiefly come into native hands, is illustrated by words as *pöntunarfélag* or *kaupfélag*, co-operativ society, *umboðssala*, commission agency, *heildsala*, wholesale, and *smásala*, retail.

The philological terminology which Rask had tried to fix was firmly established by the grammatical works of Halldór Kr. Friðriksson in the fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century, and by the Latin grammar of Dr. Jón Porkelsson and others (*Latnesk orðmyndafræði*, 1868), and comparatively few changes have been made in it by later writers. Several lexicographical works have seen the light during the last decades, which have made many additions to the vocabulary. Especially noteworthy in this respect are the Danish-Icelandic dictionary (*Ný dansk orðabók*, 1896) by Jónas Jónasson, recast and edited by Björn Jónsson, and, to a lesser extent, the English-Icelandic by Geir T. Zoëga (two editions). To the earlier Icelandic dictionaries of Björn Halldórsson and Guðbrandur Vigfússon, both of which include the modern as well as the ancient tongue, has been added a small handy modern Icelandic-English dictionary by Geir T. Zoëga (1904); and an Icelandic-Danish one by Sigrús Blöndal is about to be published. Jón Ólafsson conceived the idea of compiling a dictionary with Icelandic definitions, but only two parts of it, covering the letters A and part of B, appeared,³

¹ Law No. 33, Nov. 16, 1907.

² See Rev. Jón Jónsson, 'Stíkukerfið (tugamál og tugavog)', in *Skírnir* LXXXII, 1908, pp. 270-280. Cf. *Skólablaðið* VII, 1913, pp. 19-24, 85-88.

³ Cf. *Skírnir* LXXXV, 1913, pp. 65-79, 184-192.

and because of the author's death a continuation is not forthcoming. A modern comprehensive dictionary is greatly needed, and the government has at last decided to promote by financial support such an undertaking; scholars have been engaged for the task, but the principles upon which it is to be founded, have caused some discord among the philologists.¹

Questions of orthography have on various occasions been the cause of heated controversy in Iceland. The spelling of the early printed books was confused and inconsistent; writers pretended to follow the old orthography as represented in the manuscripts of the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, but in the first place, these were not always in agreement, and secondly, they were not adequately known at the time.² The spelling deteriorated in the course of time, capital letters in nouns were frequently used and superfluous letters were added, in imitation of Danish, where the confusion at that period defied any description.³ A slight reform was attempted at the beginning of the eighteenth century,⁴ and a closer study of the subject was made, as indicated by the treatises of Jón Ólafsson (from Grunnavík)⁵ and Eggert Ólafsson,⁶ neither of which have been printed. The Lærðómslistafélag introduced a spelling which was superior to any before, as has been mentioned above, and with the increase of linguistic knowledge promoted by the works of Rask, the spelling steadily improved, and it was at Rask's suggestion that the Bókmentafélag, in 1827, decided to use the character ð in its publications.⁷ But Rask had theories of his own on spelling in general, and he tried to reform the Danish one so as to bring it nearer to the pronunciation. It was in this spirit that Konráð Gíslason took up the matter in the

¹ See the controversy in *Ísafold* XLVI, 1919, Nos. 3 and 7 (Alex. Jóhannesson), and *Lögrjettu* XIV. 1919, Nos. 3, 5, 7, 14, 18, 29, and 32 (Jóh. L. L. Jóhannesson and Finnur Jónsson).

² A treatise on orthography said to have been written by Sigurður Stefáns-son towards the end of the sixteenth century is now lost (Hálfðán Einarsson, *Sciographia*, 1777, p. 15).

³ Verner Dahlerup, *Det danske Sprogs Historie*, 1896, pp. 55–59.

⁴ See Bishop Steinn Jónsson's preface to Bishop J. P. Vídalín's *Sjö predikaner*, Hólar, 1716, pp. (22)–(23).

⁵ *Orthographica Islandica*, AM. 435, fol. ff. 196. It is written in Icelandic.

⁶ *Nockrar óreglulegar reglur*, etc., see above. MSS.: Lbs. 229, 40; 104, 8°; 108, 8°; Brit. Mus. II, 200, 8°.

⁷ *Skírnir* 1828, pp. 41–45.

Fjölnir, in 1836,¹ laying down the law that the pronunciation was not the principal rule for spelling but the only rule (*ekki aðalregla heldur einkaregla stafsetningarinnar*). He did not propose, however, to carry this out in its furthest consequences, but he suggested various important changes. Among these were the dropping of *y*, *ý*, and limiting to a few instances the use of *x* and *z*, as these letters were not distinguishable any longer in speech; to write *j* after *g* and *k* when followed by *æ*, *e*, *i* or *í* (*gjægjast*, *gjeing*, *giirtur*, *Gjíslí*, etc.), and to bring in certain other ways the written language nearer to the speech (to write *hrur* for *hver*, *kjur* for *kyr*, etc.). This spelling was followed in the four subsequent volumes of the *Fjölnir*, but it met with a determined opposition from some of the leading scholars of the day, like Sveinbjörn Egilsson,² nor did it find favor with the public, and in despair the editors gave it up themselves, and returned to the conventional orthography, based on derivation and as sanctioned by custom, with certain modifications.³ This spelling is sometimes called after Konráð Gíslason, but was generally known in the past as *skólaréttirunin*, because it was adopted and taught by Halldór Kr. Friðriksson during his long service as teacher of Icelandic in the College of Iceland. He worked out the rules for it in his *Íslenskar rjettritunarreglur* (1859) which remained a standard work on the subject for over half a century, and they have been followed in most Icelandic books during that period. Now and then criticism was heard and some modifications proposed. Dr. Björn M. Ólsen thus advocated in a paper, read before the Teachers Association in 1889, the following changes: to write always *i* for *y*, *s* for *z*, single consonant before another consonant unless double consonant was clearly audible in speaking, and to substitute *f* for *p* before *t*.⁴ These suggestions found little favor with writers and were

¹ 'Páttur umm stafsetning,' *Fjölnir* II, 1836, pp. 1-37.—'Páttur um stafsetning.' 2. Svar til Árna-bjarnar,' *Fjölnir* III, 1837, pp. 5-18.

² It is uncertain whether one of the two articles which appeared in *Sunnanpósturinn* (II, 1836, pp. 124-126, 177-185) against the new spelling is from the pen of Svþj. Egilsson, but he wrote two treatises against it which have never been printed (Lbs. 447, 4°. Cf. B. M. Olsen, in *Tímarit hins ísl. Bókmentafél.* XII, 1891, p. 33). See also Jón Sigurðsson, *Bréf*, 1911, pp. 1-5.

³ 'Um stafsetninguna á þessu ári Fjölnis,' *Fjölnir* VII, 1844, sp. 1-3. Cf. Ólsen in *Tímarit Bmfél.* XII, 1891, pp. 58-61.)

⁴ 'Um stafsetning,' *Tímarit um uppeldi og menntamál* II, 1889, pp. 3-24.

strongly opposed by H. Kr. Friðriksson; this led to a bitter controversy between the two scholars.¹ Some ten years later another attempt at simplifying the spelling was made by the Society of Journalists (*Blaðamannafélagið*) under the leadership of Jón Ólafsson and Björn Jónsson. This became generally known as the *blaðamannaréttirunin*, and its principal differences from the accepted spelling were the following: to write *é* for *je*; not to distinguish between *æ* and *œ*; not to write a double consonant before another consonant in the same syllable unless where it was plainly audible; not to write *z* in the passive of verbs, but to retain it in other words where it had been commonly used; in words of native origin to write *f* for *p* before *t* unless *p* is found in the stem, and a similar rule applied to *g* for *k* before *t*.² Most of these were half way measures and did not really much simplify matters, but a vigorous press campaign was organized and a number of people promised to support the new spelling and to use it in their writings.³ Björn Jónsson also published a spelling dictionary (*Íslensk stafsetningaráðabók*, 1900,⁴ 2d ed., 1906). The attack on the new orthography was led by Björn M. Ólsen and H. Kr. Friðriksson, who now joined hands, and a long and acrimonious dispute followed.⁵ In 1913 the Icelandic Teachers' Association finally endorsed this journalists' spelling with the modification of writing everywhere *s* for *z*, and it urged the government to authorize this as the official orthography in the

¹ See *Ísafold* XVI, 1889, pp. 278 (Finnur Jónsson); 293–294 (B. M. Ó.); 309–310, 313, 317 (H. Kr. Fr.); 357–358, 363–364, 366 (B. M. Ó.); 386–387, 389–390 (H. Kr. Fr.); XVII, 1890, pp. 26–27 (B. M. Ó.); 58–59 (H. Kr. Fr.). Cf. also *Skólablaðið* VIII, 1914, pp. 118–119.

² *Ísafold* XXV, 1898, No. 67, pp. 266–267.—*Fjallkonan* XVI, 1899, Nos. 19–21, pp. 74, 78–79.—*Nýja öldin* I, 1898, No. 54, pp. 213–214; II, 1899, No. 1, pp. 1–2 (cf. St. G. Stephansson's poem, No. 5, p. 16).

³ The lists of these were published in *Ísafold* XXV, 1898, No. 61; XVI, 1899, Nos. 4, 8, etc.

⁴ Reviewed by Finnur Jónsson, in *Eimreiðin* VII, 1901, pp. 122–125; by Jón Ólafsson in *Nýja öldin* III, 1900, pp. 244–247. For B. M. Ólsens criticism, see *Pjóðublur* LII, 1900, Nos. 51, 53, 55–56, 58–60; LIII, 1901, Nos. 3–5, 7, 9, 12.

⁵ See *Umraður um íslenska stafsetning á fundi hins íslenska Stúdentafjelags 27. jan. 1899*. Reykjavík 1899. 8°. pp. (4) + 31. By Björn M. Ólsen and H. Kr. Friðriksson.—Jón Ólafsson, *Svar til dr. B. M. Ólsens gegn stafsetningarhúlestri hans í Stúdentafélaginu*. Reykjavík, 1899. 8°. pp. iv + 16.—Articles by H. Kr. Friðriksson also appeared in the *Dagskrá* II, 1898, Nos. 107–108; III, 1898, pp. 7–8, II. The defence was kept up in *Ísafold*, see, e.g., XXV, 1898, Nos. 56–57, 63, and various short articles in vols. XXVI–XXVII.

public schools.¹ In the meantime, Professor Finnur Jónsson had discussed the matter of spelling in a separate pamphlet (*Íslensk rjettritun*, 1909), and some years later he followed this up with a small spelling dictionary (*Orðakver einkum til leiðbeiningar i rjettritun*, 1914) which in many respects differed from that of Björn Jónsson. This merely increased the confusion and the elementary school teachers often did not know which way to turn, or what spelling to follow,² until finally the government stepped in and in 1918 authorized certain rules to be followed in the public schools and in official publications. These differ only slightly from the orthography of the journalists,³ and the action of the government has been criticized.⁴ Probably a spelling dictionary will be published in the near future.

It must be borne in mind that any sweeping changes in the orthography are inadvisable. The conservatism which hitherto has been prevalent in this field has made it possible for the common people to read the early prose literature without any difficulty, in spite of the many phonetic changes which have taken place since the writing down of the sagas. If the spelling were brought close to the modern speech, there would be a perceptible difference between the old and modern Icelandic page, and this would make the perusal of the former difficult for the present generation. Besides, as to phonetic spelling, there is always the question of what is the correct pronunciation.

The personal names in Iceland to-day are the same as or similar to those of earlier times, comparatively few ones having been added in the last centuries, at least of those most in vogue.⁵ The ancient custom of patronymics also still prevails there. To be sure, there are a few family names two or three centuries old, such as *Vídalín*, *Thorlaxius*, *Hjaltalín* and some patronymics which have in Danicized form become family names like *Thórar-*

¹ *Skólablaðið VIII*, 1914, p. 119.

² Cf. *Skólablaðið VI*, 1912, pp. 161–163, etc.

³ ‘Auglýsing um eina og sömu stafsetningu í skólum og á skólabókum,’ March 27, 1918, *Lögbirtingablað XI*, 1918., No. 13.

⁴ See articles in *Landið III*, Nos. 13–15, 25–26; *Pjóbbifur LXV*, Nos. 2 and 4; *Vörður I*, No. 10. Cf. also *Ísafold XLV*, Nos. 14 and 31.

⁵ Sigurður Hansen, ‘Um mannaheiti á Íslandi árið 1855,’ in *Skýrslur um landshagi I*, 1858, pp. 503–572.—*Íslensk mannanöfn samkvæmt manntalinu 1. des 1910. Gefið út af Hagstofu Íslands. Reykjavík, 1915.* (Hagskýrslur Íslands. 5.) 8°, pp. 125.

ensen, Stephensen, etc. Only in case of the husband's having a family name has the wife assumed his name, but otherwise, as a rule, the married woman is known as her father's daughter, e.g., *Guðrún Jónsdóttir*, wife of *Björn Guðmundsson*. Under modern conditions and as intercourse with foreign countries becomes more frequent, there are several disadvantages in retaining this system, one of which is that an Icelander at home is usually known under his baptismal name (e.g., *Björn*) while abroad he is called by his patronymic (e.g., *Mr. Guðmundsson*). For this and other reasons family names have become more common of late. The Althing took the matter under consideration and passed a bill in 1913, regulating the name giving. A commission was also appointed to make suggestions principally as to new family names. When its report was published¹ a storm of criticism and opposition broke loose, partly from those who disapproved of the suggestions made by the commission, partly from those who were anxious to preserve the old system.² Nevertheless one constantly reads in the newspapers of new family names being adopted, and it seems, after all, the natural course of events, although it must be admitted that the old custom has many attractive features. It is, however, not, as sometimes asserted, a peculiarly national custom for Iceland. It is merely a survival of a practice which in earlier times was common among Germanic peoples, and has been preserved by the rural population of the other Scandinavian countries until recently. It has now disappeared there and is bound to do likewise in Iceland, so that it seems useless to kick against the pricks.

I do not propose to deal here with the numerous phonetic changes which have taken place in the Icelandic language during the ten centuries which its history covers, nor with the alterations in inflection and grammatical forms which are surprisingly few considering the length of the period. These have been

¹ Íslensk mannanöfn. Lög, nefndarálii og nafnaskrár. Gefið út að tilhlutur Stjórnarráðs Íslands samkv. lögum nr. 41, 10. nóv. 1913. Reykjavík, 1915. 8°, pp. (2) + 80 + (4).

² Árni Pálsson, *Um etternöfn*. Reykjavík, 1916. 8°. pp. 30, and articles from various contributors in *Ísafold* XLIII, 1916, Nos. 19, 21, 23, 24, 30, 39, 42, etc. *Skírnir* XCI, 1917, pp. 286–295 (Holger Wiehe).—Cf. also earlier articles on the subject in *Skírnir* LXXXII, 1908, pp. 164–177 (G. Kamban), LXXXIII, 1909, pp. 53–64 (Jóh. L. L. Jóhannesson).

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treated elsewhere¹ although not adequately and much work is awaiting future investigators in this field. Comparatively few of the words to be found in the old prose literature have gone out of use, but a great number of new additions have been made to the vocabulary, without, however, causing any change in the character of the language, which still retains its strong, distinctive features as of old. Thus the Icelandic of to-day is no stagnant language but a living tongue in full development, and with native sources at its command for continued growth, richer perhaps than those of any language to which it is closely related.

There are probably more people who speak Icelandic now than ever before. The inhabitants of Iceland number at present about 90,000, and there are approximately 20,000 people of Icelandic birth in the United States and Canada, but the language which the latter speak, and sometimes write, leaves much to be desired; it is full of impurities and is, of course, bound to disappear as soon as the generation of immigrants dies out.² The Icelandic colony in Greenland which was established about year 1000 came to an end in the fifteenth century, since when no Icelandic has been spoken there.

Now and then one hears fears expressed as to the future of the Icelandic language lest it may succumb to foreign influences, being spoken by so small a population.³ What has preserved it throughout these many centuries is, in the first place, the isolation of the nation, and secondly the rich literature which was early developed and never has lost its hold on the people. With the modern means of communication, turning days into hours and hours into minutes, the isolation of the country no longer gives the protection of former times. But the people are now

¹ The best general survey of these changes is to be found in Finnur Jónsson, *Málfræði íslenskrar tungu og helstu atriði sögu hennar*. Kaupmannahöfn, 1908, 8°, pp. 144.—B. M. Olsen, 'Zur neuisländischen Grammatik,' in *Germania* XXVII, 1882, pp. 257–287.—For phonetic studies of Modern Icelandic, see especially H. Buergel-Goodwin's two articles: 'Dct moderna isländska uttalet,' in *Svenska landsmål och svenska folklif*, 1905 and 1908. R. Arpi, 'Anmärkningar till nyisländsk grammatik,' in *Nordiska studier tilegnade Adolf Noreen* 1904, pp. 70–77. Cf. also P. Passy, *De nordica lingua, quantum in Islandia ab antiquissimis temporibus mutata sit*. Lutetiae Batavorum, 1891, 8°, pp. 63.

² Cf. *Leifur* III, 1885, No. 14, p. 53; *Heimskringla* I, 1887, No. 49 (Einar Sæmundsson); *Sunnanfari* VII, 1898, pp. 18–19 (Jón Ólafsson); Magnús Jónsson, *Vestan um haf*. Reykjavík, 1916, pp. 58–68.

³ See *Eimreiðin* XXIII, 1918, pp. 110–113 (Magnús Jónsson); 234–238 (Holger Wiehe).

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better instructed, possess a modern literature richer and of a greater variety than ever before, have developed institutions on national lines, and have secured the position of an independent nation with pride in its history and reverence for its traditions, and, above all, with a genuine love for its language. Much has been written in Icelandic, in poetry and prose, in praise of the mother tongue; these are no empty words but expressions of sincere affection by the writers, echoed by the whole people.¹ This may at times lead to exaggeration such as the assertion that Icelandic is the best of all languages.² That it is the best for the Icelanders no one will doubt, but it is presumption on the part of the natives to praise it at the expense of other tongues. It is the most precious possession of the nation, and, being now fully aware of that, the people will cling to it and preserve it with greater care than ever. The only thing that might endanger its future would be a large immigration of foreigners which only would be possible or probable in case of a rapid industrial development on a large scale, and at present there is no prospect of that.

¹ The oldest and mildest of these is Guðm. Andrésson's *Vöggukvæði*, printed in Runólfur Jónsson's grammar of 1651. Poems of a later date are e.g., Jónas Hallgrímsson's *Ásta*, Steingrímur Thorsteinsson's *Eg elskar yður, þér Íslands fjöll*, Matthias Jochumsson's *Til Vestur-Íslendinga—Bragarbótl*, Stefán G. Stephansson's *Móðurmálið*, etc., etc.

² Cf. Bjarni Jónsson, *EKKI veldur sá er varir*. Reykjavík, 1908, p. 41.—The praise ought to be qualified, after the fashion of the English writer who says about his language that 'an Englishman may be excused for regarding it as the noblest instrument of human thought' (Herbert Paul, *Men and letters*, 1911, p. 181). Cf. also J. N. Madvig's tribute to his native language, quoted by J. Byskov, *Modersmalet*, København, 1913, p. 119.

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